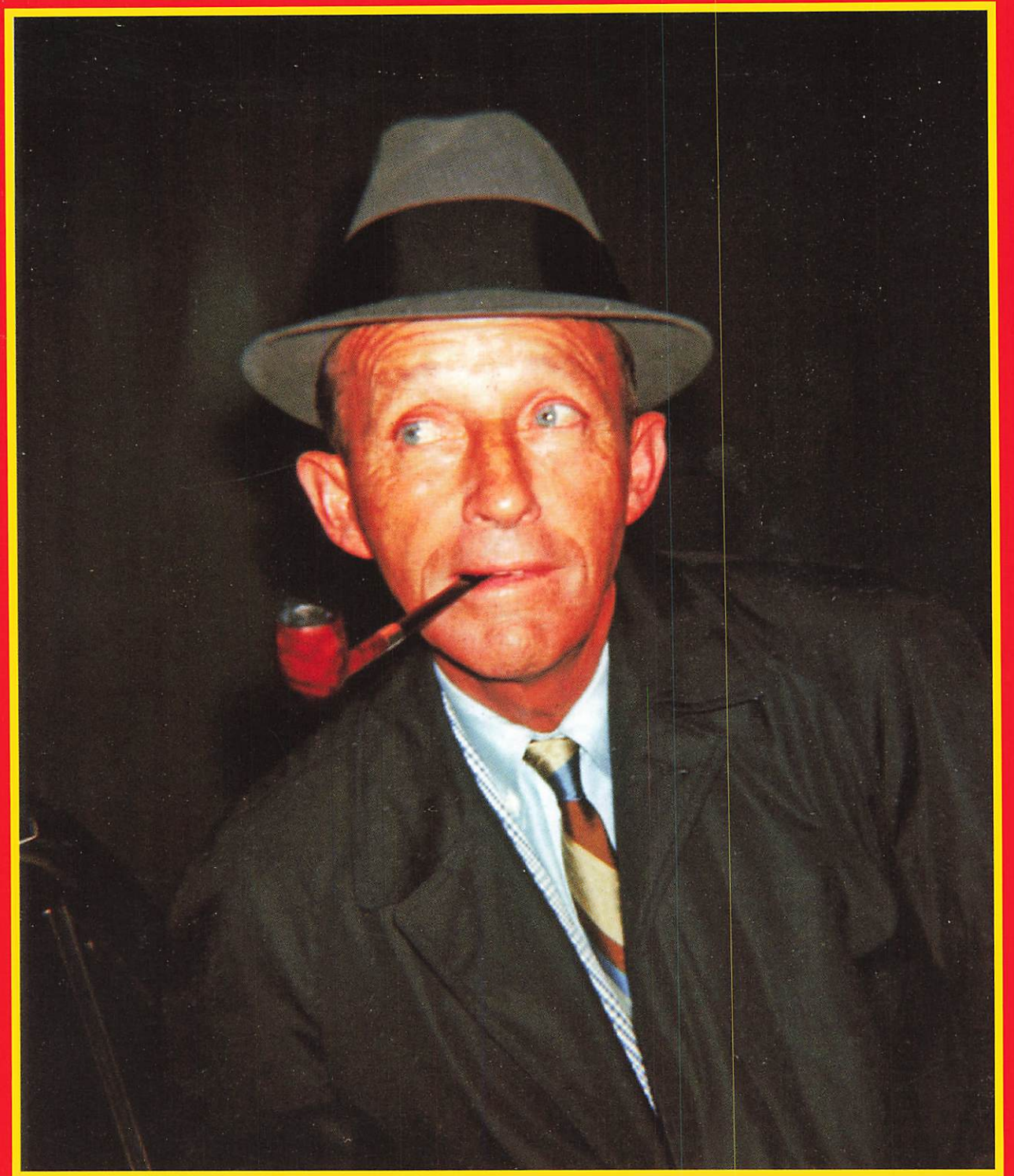
BING

Issue 180

Winter
2018



THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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BING magazine: www.bingmagazine.co.uk
Bing Crosby Enterprises: www.BingCrosby.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326
Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Club_Crosby

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Membership renewals fall due on 1st. January each year and subscription rates effective for 2019 are:

USA and Canada	US $35 per annum
UK	£20 per annum
Mainland Europe, including Eire	£22 per annum
Australia and New Zealand	A$50 per annum
Rest of World	£23 per annum

All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to *The International Club Crosby* with the exception of::

(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins

(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the spring, summer and winter of each year.

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EDITORIAL

It was typical that, having bemoaned the lack of new releases, the large Time Life DVD collection appeared whilst the previous magazine was in the process of being printed. We did manage to include a "Stop Press" item which hopefully alerted you all to what has unfortunately turned out to be a costly and rather controversial set. I wonder if we really should have kept quiet because the advertising was somewhat misleading in view of the severe editing of many of the shows. Richard Baker reviews it for us in *Keeping Track*. A pleasant surprise for us though is the release of "Holiday in Europe" by Sepia Records. I only became aware of this CD in the later stages of its development but I was able to suggest that one of the rehearsal tracks recorded in the UK in 1960 be included.

Gary Giddins' excellent new book is now available and Ken Crossland discusses it in his Crosbyana section. It's a book you just can't put down and anyone interested in Bing should read it. Also, Howard Crosby and Bob Ferguson have put together a very interesting article about Bing and the family, Ron McBride shares some rare photos from the Edsel show and all the regular contributors are here too including Jeremy Rose who examines "A Little Bit of Irish". David Lobosco remembers the film of *Pennies from Heaven.*

Increasingly I am sending regular emails to members, particularly if there are any time sensitive matters. If you are not receiving emails from me and would like to be added to my mailing list, please let me know. I try not to bother members too often.

A notice about next year's subscriptions / dues is enclosed with this magazine. Please send off your payment as soon as possible to spare the club the cost and effort of sending out many chaser letters. Copy date for the spring issue is March 1st.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Malcolm Macfarlane macwilmslo@aol.com

Once again, as December slowly approaches and holiday decorations begin to sprout up everywhere—earlier and earlier each year, it seems, at least here in the U.S.—we Crosby fans start to feel the excitement that comes with the possibility of hearing Bing's warm baritone again on the radio, while walking down the street, or at the mall, something that unfortunately doesn't usually happen throughout the rest of the year. It's somehow comforting to think that, over four decades after his passing and even though a myriad other artists have also recorded the same Christmas songs, Bing remains the true voice of Christmas. I admit to playing Crosby's Yuletide recordings occasionally at other moments of the year, but they never seem more enjoyable than when the holidays roll around and the weather turns chillier, at least in most of the Northern hemisphere, that is. And as we go through our yearly ritual of revisiting Bing's large Christmas output, I encourage all members to play the classic Decca sides (which are still my favorites overall) but to not forget other, more overlooked recordings, such as the Capitol sides or the album *A Time to Be Jolly*, which give us a more complete picture of Bing's unsurpassed Christmas musical legacy.

Since I haven't had the chance to read Gary Giddins's second installment of his mammoth Bing biography yet, I will simply echo my British Co-Editor's words of praise with great anticipation. Mr. Giddins has always been one of my most admired jazz critics, and having read most of his books on the subject as well as his classic first volume on Bing, I know this second part will not disappoint. Also, while looking at Malcolm's part of the Editorial, I was happily surprised to learn that Sepia Records has decided to come out with a proper CD reissue of *Holiday in Europe*, a lovely album about which I have already written for BING and that was previously available digitally only as a rather expensive and hard-to-find Japanese import. I am personally very grateful to the good people at Sepia, who, no doubt unbeknownst to them, have now made one of my longtime Bing-related wishes come true.

As always, my most heartfelt gratitude to all contributors to this issue, without whom the magazine would not be possible. This time, my own contribution is a piece on *Bing 'n' Basie*, a 1972 album that is among my favorites in the Crosby canon despite the fact that it has always been a source of puzzlement for me because I consider it a missed opportunity for both participants. I try to come to terms with this in the article, which I hope you will enjoy.

And finally, we appreciate in advance your sending your dues to the club in a timely manner, and I wish all members the happiest of holidays wherever they may be reading these lines.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez antongarciafdez@gmail.com

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

In the last issue of BING I requested that members contact Wig and me with their views on the ICC's future, highlighting that our revenues are declining as the membership inevitably reduces year on year. Member Richard Muirhead and Australian member Graham Pascoe came back with detailed suggestions both strongly emphasising that their first preference would be to increase subscriptions so as to retain three issues of the magazine per year. Other members I have spoken with also opted for this preference but neither Wig nor I have a feel for what the majority of members would wish for going forward.

Presently, I anticipate that the ICC will be just able to provide three magazines in 2019 assuming that we have a good response to renewal requests following the issue of this magazine. Future financing is uncertain, therefore Wig and I feel that it will be timely to send out a flyer with the summer 2019 issue seeking members' views and we will suggest options for members to consider and take your preferences into account as we move forward into 2020.

It is membership renewal time and may I make the usual plea to all members for a prompt response and hopefully, given the above comments about our parlous funds, members will give generously when renewing their 2019 subscription.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members with a wish that they will derive much interest and enjoyment from their membership of the club.

UNITED STATES

Robert Ferguson (Richland, Washington)
Mike Isaacson (St Louis, Missouri)
Jimmy Palumbo (Ramsey, New Jersey)
Dan Singer (Corklandt Manor, New York)
Mitch Trimboli (Huntingdon Station, New York)

UNITED KINGDOM

Jack Skelland (Warrington, Cheshire)
Mr N Portch (Frampton Cottrell, Bristol)

DONATIONS

Our members continue to support the ICC with additional funds and Malcolm and Jeremy Rose have been distributing the large collections of our late members Gwen Harvey and John Norris Wood in recent months. Gwen's collection has so far raised £386 of which £207 is going to the Hospice which looked after Gwen. The remainder comes to the ICC funds. John's collection has produced £274 so far for the ICC. There are still some items left and these are advertised in *Trading Post*.

We are grateful to all who gift extra funding to the club.

DEATHS

We are very sorry to report the death of Honorary Member – **Mary Carlisle Blakeley** (Woodland Hills, Cal.) age 104

Wig, in an e-mail to your secretary commented - "I always found Mary to be the most charming of Bing's early co-stars and that she had become an enthusiastic member several years ago, when our fellow ICC member Adam Swanson flew to California to play for her all of the songs from her three films with Bing." Adam had taught himself the songs from the relevant Jonzo CDs that he had obtained from Wig. A full obituary can be found in the *Once in a While* section. Our sincere condolences are extended to Mary's family and friends.

BING CROSBY ON CD

This is my usual reminder that the following single CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £7.50, Europe £9.50 and the rest of the world £10.50. The price for the double CD is £9.50 UK, £11.50 Ireland & Europe, £15 for rest of the world.

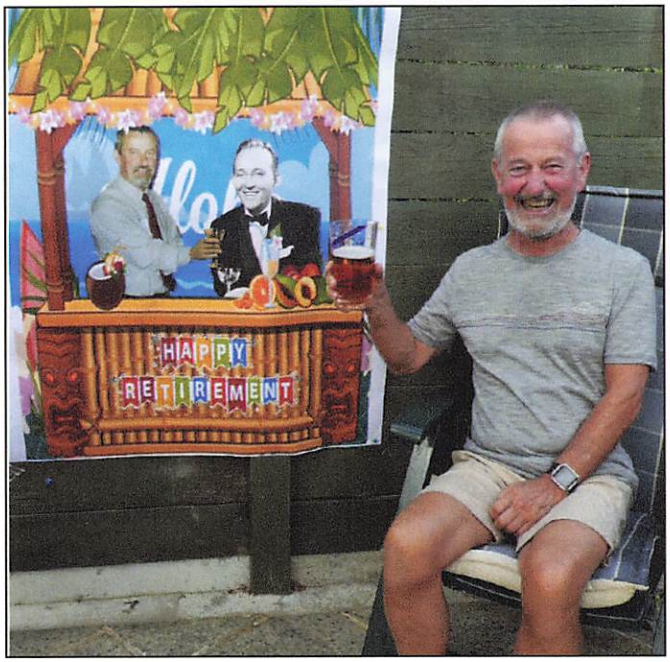
Members in the US and Canada should obtain their

copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington.
BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vols. 4, 8, 9 and 10
BING CROSBY and the Kraft Music Hall – Rare Original Survivors
THE ROAD TO HONG KONG – SAY ONE FOR ME
BING CROSBY – GOOD AND RARE VOL 3.
JOIN BING & SING ALONG (2 CD SET)

I wish the compliments of the season to all members and their families.

Michael Crampton mdcrampton@gmail.com

(Editor: Incidentally, Michael retired at the end of August after an impressive 60 years at work and he celebrated in appropriate fashion in his garden.)



Wayne Martin (1930-2018)

We were very sorry to learn of the death of Wayne Martin who did so much for the Crosby cause over so many years. David Lobosco has penned a tribute.

I lost a great friend earlier on in 2018 when Wayne Martin passed away. He was more than the editor of BINGANG and vice-president of Club Crosby from 1987 to 2003. He was more than an avid and dedicated Bing Crosby fan. He was simply a great friend.

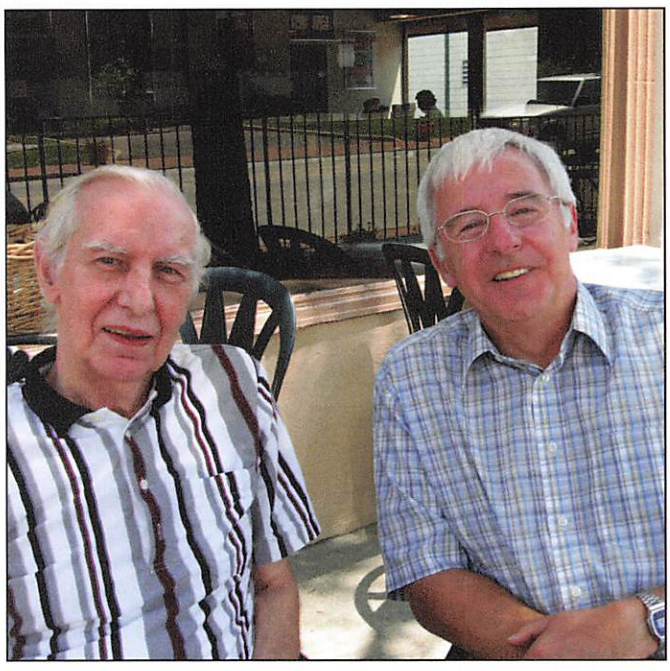
In 1990, I was a teenager searching the flea markets for Bing Crosby records. This was before we nearly had everything by Bing readily available. Back then, I was lucky if I had a quarter of what Bing Crosby recorded. Anyways, I discovered a mint copy of Bing's last album "Seasons". On the back was an address for Club Crosby. The address was to Priscilla Koernig, who was the former President of Club Crosby. Wayne wrote to me, and that began a long friendship.

I never met Wayne personally, but we often wrote back and forth to each other and when computers became the norm, we emailed each other. I have letters where we not only talked about Bing Crosby, but we shared our personal lives.

Wayne LeRoy Martin was a Veteran of the Korean War serving in the United States Army. He received a Masters degree in Library Sciences from the University of Colorado and a Masters degree in English from Central Missouri State University.

Wayne was the Director of Libraries for Brentwood, Missouri school systems, retiring in 1989. He was a member of United Church of Christ in Kirkwood, Missouri prior to moving to Higginsville in 2011. He is survived by his wife, Sandra and his daughter, Robin Teter.

Wayne not only knew what Bing Crosby records I acquired, but he knew when I broke up with a girlfriend or when my grandfather was sick. When my grandfather died in 2002, Wayne sent me a beautiful sympathy card. When I got married in 2004, Wayne sent me a wedding gift.



Wayne (left) with Editor Malcolm in 2006

The last time I talked with Wayne was in July of 2007. He emailed me that his memory was really starting to fail, and he felt it was "more than just normal plight of getting old". He talked about moving into assisted living, and he had already started to get rid of his Bing records. He told me it was okay that his mind was failing, but what really troubled him was that he could not remember the words to Bing records now. Sometime in 2008, Wayne had a stroke and for the next decade he lived in a nursing home.

I would not be involved in the ICC had it not been for Wayne Martin. He was a true mentor to me, and I

regret that I never met him face to face. I have a whole bin of the letters we wrote to each other, and I cherish each and every one of them. Hopefully Wayne is looking down on us now and is happy that his fellow Bing Crosby fans are still continuing on and spreading the talents of Bing that he did all his life.

David Lobosco

(Editor: Many thanks, David. Wayne took over as Editor of BINGANG in August 1987 and during his 16 years at the helm he consistently produced a first-class magazine. Professionally set out, it covered a plethora of Crosby subjects with Wayne's own scholarly contributions being highlights. He undertook much discographical research and for example he examined Bing's Blue label and Black label Deccas, his Personality series, his 45rpm box sets and his EPs. Reference work which is still invaluable today. The comprehensive sheet music index was another of Wayne's achievements and the most helpful subject index of BINGANG articles from 1979-2003 is something I use frequently. Both of these last two can now be found on the BING magazine web site.

Wayne handled the negotiations with the International Crosby Circle for the merger with Club Crosby in 2003 and he continued as American Co-editor of the combined club for a further year. I found him a delightful man to work with, always tactful and sensitive to the feelings of others. We owe him a huge debt for all he did for Crosbyana over so many years.)

The Gwen Harvey Collection

Michael mentioned Gwen Harvey's collection, Jeremy Rose tells us more.

When long-standing ICC member Gwen Harvey died earlier this year at the age of 94, her daughter Gale was faced with the daunting task of disposing of Gwen's vast collection of Crosbyana, assembled over many decades. Knowing of Gwen's long association with the ICC, Gale contacted Malcolm to ask for his assistance in ensuring that the collection went to a good home.

Gwen lived in Farnborough, Hampshire, which is about two hours' drive from my home in Cambridgeshire, and having seen the announcement about the collection on the "Crosby Fan World" notice board, I arranged to drive down one Saturday morning to meet up with Gale at Gwen's house. Malcolm and his wife Pat also drove down from Cheshire, and between us we planned to clear as much of the material as possible.

The collection consisted of upwards of 150 scrapbooks compiled by Gwen, 40 or more well-filled photograph albums, 500-odd CDs, 500-odd LPs, 200-odd 78s, approximately 50 DVDs, a large quantity of books and sheet music, numerous framed photographs, posters, etc., and various items of Bing-related memorabilia. It was obviously going to be a mammoth task!

I volunteered to deal with the scrapbooks, the photograph albums, the CDs and the DVDs, while Malcolm took responsibility for the 78s, the books and sheet music and the general memorabilia. The LPs were being stored in a separate storage facility, and Malcolm looked through these to separate out some of the more sought-after items. The remainder had to be left behind and I eventually collected these a few weeks later.

Jeremy (left) and Malcolm helping Gale with the collection.

When I arrived home I started on the task of sorting through the boxes and boxes of material I had brought with me. I found it a very moving experience. Gwen saved, and very clearly treasured, EVERYTHING to do with Bing!

There were scrapbooks full of snapshots of a television screen, taken when Bing's movies were playing; scrapbooks of pages from old ICC calendars; every railway ticket, hotel bill and souvenir menu from the Leeds meetings Gwen attended over the years; press cuttings and magazine articles from both sides of the Atlantic dating back to the 1930s; television and radio listings; Christmas cards from fellow Bing enthusiasts; I could go on and on... Everything carefully snipped out and pasted into place.

The CDs were mainly home-produced compilations made either by Gwen's daughter or sent to Gwen by her many friends in the Crosby community. "Dear Gwen, Thought you might like a copy of this..." "Dear Gwen, Not sure whether you've heard this..." Each note meticulously saved inside the CD case. She was obviously held in great affection by those who shared her passion for Bing.

The photograph albums were a real treasure-trove. Once I'd set aside the poorer-quality photocopies and the print-outs of eBay listings of Bing material, etc., I

was left with approximately 600 good quality 10x8s covering virtually every aspect of Bing's life and career. Gwen obviously *loved* Dixie, for instance, and there are some lovely original portrait shots and movie stills from the days when Dixie Lee was a bigger star than our Mr Crosby!

(I intend to collate the photographs into themed albums for use as a resource by the ICC, but I'm afraid that will be a bit of a long-term project!)

Gwen's collection represented a true labour of love on her part. She spent her final weeks in a hospice, and I'm very sorry to say that I never met her. I wish I had. I think we would have had a lot to talk about...

Jeremy Rose

(Editor: Gwen was a lovely lady who really was one the keenest Crosby fans I have ever met. I visited her at her home some years ago and was amazed at how it was virtually a shrine to Bing. I felt that I owed it her to see that her collection was passed on to those who would appreciate it and at the same time Jeremy and I raised some funds for the hospice which looked after her. The recent gift of John Norris Wood's collection to the ICC has enable us to merge the collections and attempt to raise more funds for the ICC. See Trading Post.)

Bing Crosby Holiday Film Festival

The 13th annual Bing Crosby Holiday Film Festival is scheduled to take place on December 8 at the Bing Crosby Theater in Spokane. Films to be shown are *White Christmas, Pennies from Heaven* and *Road to Zanzibar*. An added atraction will be Howard Crosby who will be singing some of his Uncle's favorite songs with the Hot Club of Spokane.

An Invitation to the San Fernando Valley

Maureen Solomon and Cliff Brisbois have an invitation for us.

You are invited — to celebrate with us the 73rd Anniversary of Bing Crosby's movie, "The Bells of St. Mary's." Meet in person, Peggy McKim, one of the few surviving actresses in this movie. View the only colorized movie version available in its entirety. Tour the only Bing Crosby museum anywhere in the USA with 513 Bing displays on exhibit. Taking photos *will* be permitted. Join us in Bing's *San Fernando Valley* at 29659 Quail Run Drive, Agoura Hills, CA, Sunday December 9th 2018.... 1PM to 6PM. RSVP: 818-707-3065 (please leave message)

"Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day" – Bing's Movie Anniversary waits for You and Yours

Going My Way in Warrington

Jason Liddiard reports on his latest branch meetings.

The Summer meeting

The sun is shining, the grass is green,
The orange and palm trees sway.
There's never been such a day,
In Winwick Park WA.

Well we didn't have orange or palm trees, but we did have some beautiful balmy summer weather and a number of barmy (but not beautiful) attendees for our summer Bing gathering on July 14.

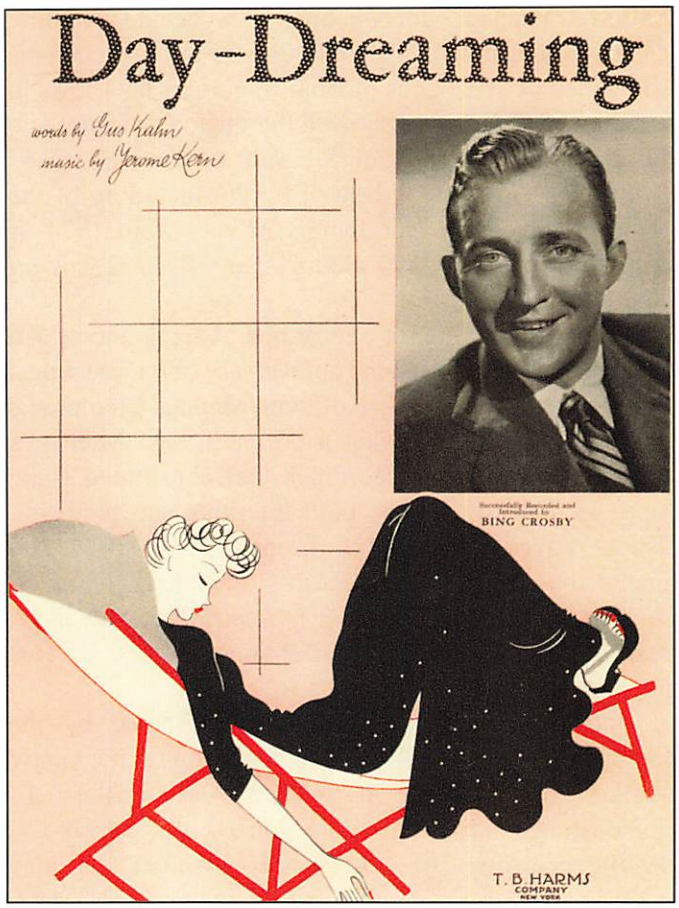
Our opener was from the wonderful Lost Radio Recordings (JSP6701) of Bing KMH performances from 1935-36, *Some of These Days,* with the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra.

No new attendees this time, but a promise from two more locals to check-in next time.

Next up, Bing's 1954 collaboration with Les Brown, *Sunshine of Virginia*, which sparked some comment as to why a big band session such as this should only yield two recordings.

Member Mark Spry sent a fabulous choice request via email of Bing and Louis ripping up *Lazy River*.

A new feature 'On This Day' - recordings made by Bing through the years and on the same date as our meetings – gave us the opportunity to hear Bing *Day Dreaming* with Victor Young's orchestra from 14th July, 1941.



Another new idea called 'Something Nice I Heard' gave us the opportunity to play anything we might have heard recently either on radio, CD or personal playlist for the benefit of those present. This time we played the other Les Brown track cut during the same session as *Sunshine of Virginia*, that being *All She'd Say was Um-Hum*, followed by the 1939 version of *Stardust*, with Matty Malneck.

In our 'News and Reviews' section we were honoured to see a galley proof of Gary Giddins's second volume of Bing's biography, *Swinging on a Star: the War Years*. Believe me, this is well worth the wait!

Fifty years ago Bing released two contemporary albums: *Thoroughly Modern Bing* and *Hey Jude, Hey Bing*. It was very interesting for 'one of the newer fellas' like me to hear members' memories of having bought these records around the time of their original release.

From *Thoroughly Modern...* we played *Thoroughly Modern Millie*; *Puff the Magic Dragon* and *Love Is Blue*. All tracks recorded with the Bugs Bower Orchestra.

We reminisced about *Hey Jude/Hey Bing* by showing Bing's 1969 performances on 'The Hollywood Palace' of *Hey Jude* (with Gary Crosby) and the Joni Mitchell standard *Both Sides Now*.

Media cover of the recent announcement to close the iconic Maida Vale studios in London, lead to us playing *The Night Is Young and You're So Beautiful* from Bing's Final Chapter recordings with Gordon Rose, 11th October, 1977.

On 29th April this year, I was privileged to see broadcaster and king of the chat shows Michael Parkinson in conversation at The Lowry centre in Salford. Michael's recollections of working with Bing clearly demonstrated his admiration for our man, and his show included two clips of Bing singing on his shows in 1972 and 1975. So we showed the duet of Michael and Bing singing a parody of *Pleasure of Your Company* from the 1975 show, followed by the recording of the same title by Bing and Johnny Mercer from 1974 as featured on Bing's 1975 album *That's What Life is all About*.

Then it was time for a refreshment break and a cake to help celebrate the second anniversary of our meetings.

Our second half kicked off with Michael Crampton's 'Crosby Dozen', and what a dozen it was! Michael's choice was made of recordings that constituted some very personal memories, both hilarious and poignant. Tracks covered the period from 1931 to 1976 and included many Crosby treasures such as *I Found a Million Dollar Baby*, *It's Easy to Remember*, *Nell and I*, and *Oh, Tell Me Why*; as Michael himself declared, 'Has anyone ever done that better!'

Our 'Centenaries' subjects, as presented by the knowledgeable Keith Richmond, were songwriter Cindy Walker and loveable performer Pearl Bailey. To demonstrate their Bing connection we played Mr C's 1940 recording of the Cindy Walker country composition *Lone Star Trail*, followed by the wickedly hilarious duet with 'Miss Bailey' on *Gone Fishin'* from the Pasadena Show of March 1977.

Our main film clip section was taken from the amazing recent release on Blu-Ray of 'The King of Jazz'. We showed Bing's contribution in singing *Music Has Charms* over the opening credits and his voice-overs on the early technicolour cartoon 'Fable in Jazz'. Bing's appearances with the Brox Sisters and the Rhythm Boys, notably in the thrilling *So the Bluebirds and the Blackbirds* were absolutely breath taking and worth the price of the Blu-Ray alone!

To help bring us back down from the dizzy heights of 1930, we finished with Bing's 1977 collaboration with Pete Moore on the elegant Johnny Mercer song *Summer Wind*:

And softer than a piper man,
One day he'll call to you,
I lost you to the summer wind...

The Autumn meeting

Our Autumn Bing fest on October 6 began earlier than usual with a chance to peruse the memorabilia room, set up to offer some of the items recently bequeathed to the ICC. There were lots of interesting 'Bing-things' to peruse and it was great to see members heading home with bulging goody bags later in the day.

Our seasonal opener, *September in the Rain* from the Bregman album had everybody tapping their feet from the off. As we were already into the month of Halloween, we also slipped in Bing's 1932 *A Ghost of a Chance*.

A warm welcome was extended to first time attendee Jeremy Rose with a few tracks specially chosen for his initiation.

In these days of email and instant messaging, it was refreshing to receive a hand-written postcard from member Mark Spry, sending in his request for *Weaver of Dreams* from a 1951 recording session with John Scott Trotter.

'On this Day' featured *A Faded Summer Love*, recorded October 6, 1931 with the Victor Young orchestra. This is the kind of track you wouldn't ordinarily come across unless you have your playlist on shuffle (or attend one of our meetings, of course) and it's an absolute joy, loaded with Bing idiosyncrasies and that voice (and what a voice!) from 1931.

'Something Nice I Heard' was an opportunity to play something we might have heard recently either on radio, CD or personal playlist for the benefit of those present. A sample of tracks played were *Give Me the Simple Life*, heard on Don Black's Sunday night Radio2 show, *Dancing in the Dark*, heard on a Radio2 interview with Mel Brooks, and *Love Won't Let You Get Away*, with the Billy May orchestra and Rosemary Clooney from 1958, and heard on The Great American Songbook Internet radio station.

I like to keep busy, but what I call 'nice busy'. Without sounding selfish, this means keeping busy doing the things I like or want to do. So apart from being a member of the ICC I'm also a Son of the Desert! The Sons of the Desert is an international fraternal organisation devoted to the lives and films of Laurel & Hardy and was founded in 1964. As well as holding monthly regional meetings and film shows, there is an annual UK convention, European and bi-annual international convention to keep members 'busy'. Sometimes the paths cross between the ICC and the SoTD and I recently received a DVD from a US-based SoTD who has done a lot of research on the Hollywood Victory Caravan, a wartime tour by Hollywood stars, including Bing and Laurel & Hardy, to raise money for The Army and Navy Relief Society (a charity supporting families and children of military personnel).

The DVD features actual colour 16mm home movie footage of these stars performing live in Philadelphia on May 2, 1942. Unfortunately, the footage does not include Bing as he joined the tour just a few days later on May 5, but it does feature some performers with links to Bing, including Bob Hope, Groucho Marx and Joan Blondell, so we played the opening 10 minutes to give everyone present a feel for what the Hollywood Caravan performances were like.

Also on the DVD is the 1945 Paramount production *Hollywood Victory Caravan*, a two-reeler made for the War Activities Committee and US Treasury Dept., and this does feature Bing who sings *We've Got Another Bond to Buy* in the finale. The film includes a solo by pianist Carmen Cavallaro, so we had to follow-up with the 1945 *I Can't Begin to Tell You* – a quintessential 1940s Bing performance, if ever there was one!

Next up was Geoff Vizard with his personalised 'Crosby Dozen'. Geoff's choice was made up of recordings linked to personal memories and some old favourites. One of Geoff's tracks was the Bing and Rosie duet *On a Slow Boat to China* from the London Palladium concert recording of 1976. It was a real thrill for me to hear Geoff's recollections of buying his ticket and taking a trip to London to attend the Palladium shows in 1976 & 77, told with such emotion and enthusiasm as only he can – thanks, Geoff, for helping to make our Autumn meeting one to remember!

Then it was time for a refreshment break and another trip to the memorabilia room, just in case we'd missed anything!

Our first film clip, following the intermission, was songs from the recently issued DVD of ***She Loves Me Not***, kindly brought along on the day by Malcolm Macfarlane.

This gathering was our first opportunity to dip into the TimeLife DVD boxset. Our first presentation was the amazing TV show of Bing in Argentina c.1970. His performance of *Pennies from Heaven* is worth the price of the set alone! Despite its shortcomings, we'll certainly be dipping into more treasures from this set at future meetings.

This particular gathering was, without doubt, one of the most interactive we've had. So much so, in fact, that I had to drop two planned features from the programme!

We just had time for a seasonal finish - Bing's 1977 collaboration with Pete Moore on the reflective *September Song*:

And these few precious days,
I'll spend with you.
These precious days,
I'll spend with you...

Jason Liddiard **e**mail:jkl@galleryjkl.com

(Editor: These really are most enjoyable meetings and I am looking forward to the next one on December 15.)

Opening of Del Mar is a cool summer treat

Pete Monaco writing in the St. George Daily Spectrum on July 14 looked forward to the opening of the Del Mar racetrack.

The opening of Del Mar on July 18 is one of the more pleasant official signs of summer and few could argue this historic racetrack harbors some of the best racing in the country at a rather unique coastal setting.

The Del Mar Thoroughbred Club is nestled on the shore of the Pacific Ocean, about 20 miles north of San Diego. For over 80 years it's been a seaside retreat for the rich and famous and we can mostly thank Bing Crosby for its inception. When the gates opened on July 3, 1937, Bing Crosby personally met the arriving fans. He owned horses, loved horse racing and promoted the sport to anyone who would listen. He built Del Mar in a partnership with actors Pat O'Brien, Gary Cooper, Joe E. Brown, Charles S. Howard and Oliver Hardy. Reportedly, Crosby came up $100,000 short of making the Del Mar deal happen and he borrowed the money against his life insurance. Bing Crosby was serious as a heart attack, all about the racetrack and all in.

His posse of Hollywood stars brought lots of friends to Del Mar and the people came out in droves to see these famous people and play the horses. You could expect to see more movie stars in the turf club on the weekends than you'd see in a month's worth of movies. By 1940, the summer playground was the ultimate place to be and was known as the Saratoga of the West Coast.

Crosby was cool

Bing Crosby wanted to be involved in most racetrack doings and was probably slightly obsessive and compulsive. One day at Del Mar, Crosby decided he wanted to call a race. He squeaked by for the first half of the call but when the field hit the top of the stretch, Crosby and everyone else realized he was colorblind and couldn't decipher the saddle cloth colors as they all looked the same. He handed the microphone back to the regular track announcer in mid-race and he finished the call.

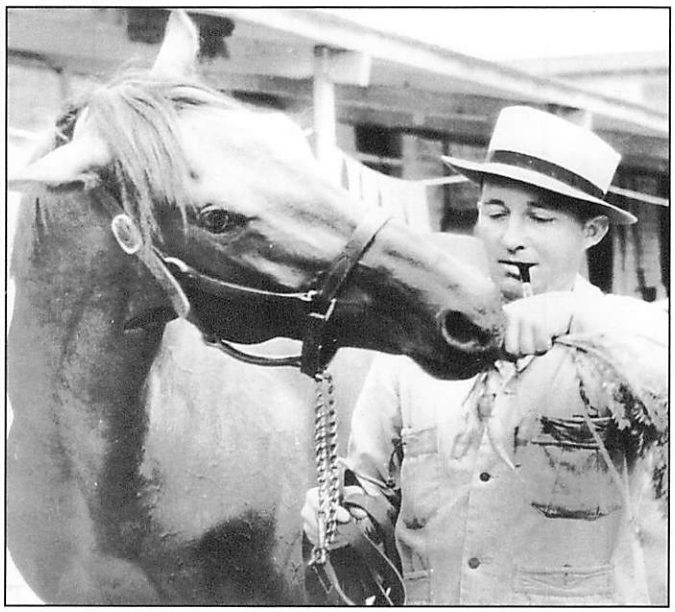
Another day while cruising the track, Bing took notice that the beach was only half a mile from the quarter pole at Del Mar and was inspired to write a song about the racetrack and its proximity to the ocean. He worked with John Burke and James V. Monaco (no relation) and they came up with "Where the Surf Meets the Turf," which was recorded on July 5, 1941. The song was a big success and was played at the beginning and the end of each racing card at the track and the routine goes on to this day.

Seabiscuit vs. Ligaroti

It wasn't the song that gave Del Mar national recognition but rather two horses in one match race a few years earlier.

Seabiscuit was America's top racehorse in 1938, and Ligaroti was a top 6-year-old Argentine-bred who was owned by Crosby and Lin Howard. On Aug. 12, they met in a $25,000 winner-take-all match race. Seabiscuit was toting 130 pounds to Ligaroti's 115, and 18,000 people came out to see if Seabiscuit was good enough to spot this horse 15 pounds and still prevail at the 1? mile distance.

George Wolf was riding Seabiscuit and broke for the lead but Ligaroti, with Spec Richardson aboard, caught up quickly, and the two were basically on even terms for most of the race. Seabiscuit prevailed on the wire by a hard-earned nose. But there was some drama just before the wire as the two jockeys seemed to be grabbing and wrestling with each other. The stewards flashed the inquiry sign and even threatened to suspend both jockeys, but no change was made in the non-wagering event. The race attracted national attention and Del Mar was now on the map and the track enjoyed the fanfare.



Bing gives Ligaroti a snack

But the momentum and success were stopped in their tracks as World War II took over the attention of the country, and the facility closed in 1942. Initially, it was used for training by the U.S. Marine Corps and later on as a manufacturing plant for aviation parts. After surviving and then thriving, Old Del Mar was now dark and stagnant. But on Aug. 15, 1945, the sun came out and the track reopened to the tune of 20,324 racing fans who wagered $958,476 and set a new record for the track handle. To make things a bit sweeter for the racetrack, the Santa Fe Railroad started offering a "racetrack special" in 1946. The new train ride started bringing in a new wagering crowd, as well as new horses and their handlers from Los Angeles. The track was healthy and so was thoroughbred horse racing.

If the Shoe fits

It would be impossible to write a few notes about Del Mar and not include the great Bill Shoemaker. The Texan jockey set a record of 52 wins at the 1949 meet and became the first apprentice rider to claim the track's riding title. The Shoe won a total of 8,833 races in his career and he won 94 of those races at Del Mar in 1954 during the 41-day season. This was his track, and he seemed to dominate every meeting. In those days the Del Mar surface was extremely conducive to speed, and Shoemaker would break horse after horse on the lead and they rarely caught him. On Sept. 4, 1954, he became the first jockey to win six races in one day at the Del Mar oval.

In 1987, Shoemaker teamed up with legendary trainer Charlie Whittingham to win the Del Mar Handicap. It was the 93rd stakes victory for Shoemaker, and it would be his final at Del Mar. I think it's safe to say that Mr. Shoemaker owned Del Mar when he rode there.

Still going strong

Del Mar will conduct its 79th summer racing season Wednesday, and the meet will run through Sept. 3. The 36-day meet will feature six Grade I Stakes races highlighted by the $1 million Pacific Classic on Aug. 18. Other top-graded stakes races include the San Diego Handicap and the San Clemente Stakes, both to be run on July 21.

Racing will be conducted on a Wednesday-Sunday basis throughout the season, with the exception of the Labor Day closer on a Monday. First post will be at 2 p.m. with the exception of Fridays when it will shift to 4 p.m.

This great and beautiful racetrack has survived everything that was thrown at it and it still oozes class onto the sand around the Pacific Ocean. We are very lucky to still have this great track around and we owe most of it to Bing Crosby.

Pete Monaco

(Editor: Also whilst on the subject of Del Mar, I was interested to see an article by our own Martin McQuade in the Guitar Player magazine recently).

Flashback: Richie Sambora channels Bing Crosby during Performance at Del Mar Racetrack

The former Bon Jovi guitarist gave thoroughbred racing fans a taste of the Bing Crosby magic

Back on November 3, 2017, **Richie Sambora** must have felt right at home when he was guest of honor at The Breeders' Cup World Championship Horse Race, held this year for the first time at Del Mar Thoroughbred Club. By the age of ten, Sambora had developed a love for horses, and he was placing ten-dollar bets during outings with his dad to Monmouth Racetrack, New Jersey.

Sambora marked the occasion by performing Del Mar co-founder Bing Crosby**'s** song "Where the Surf Meets the Turf" — a tune that has heralded every day at the San Diego-area racetrack since it opened in 1937 — with a replica of a 1940s Epiphone (actually, a new Epiphone De Luxe Classic, Masterbilt Century Collection, in Vintage Natural). Bassist Michael Bradford joined the former Bon Jovi guitarist for the tribute to Bing.

"It was an honor to sing Bing's song," said Sambora at the time. "He should be perpetuated as much as Frank Sinatra, because Bing was the guy who *inspired* Frank Sinatra. I've always admired Bing, ever since I was in wedding bands as a teenager. And Les Paul, who was like a father to me, would often tell me during jams at The Iridium New York how much Bing meant to him. His singing had soul!"

According to Terry Ahern, Sambora's Media Strategist: "This was a dream fulfilled for Richie."

Martin McQuade

What's playing at the Roxy?

I'll tell you what was playing at the Roxy on October 7. It was Ron Field's double bill presentation at the Roxy Theatre in Morton, Washington - about 100 miles from both Seattle and Portland airports. Ron featured Bing's six Mack Sennett shorts plus the 1933 Errol Flynn film *In Search of the Bounty*. Ron had wanted to put his show on a week later to tie in with Bing's passing but unfortunately the theatre was already booked for that day.

Bing 'n' Basie: A Missed Opportunity

Anton Garcia-Fernandez looks at the 1972 album.

Originally released on Daybreak Records in 1972, *Bing 'n' Basie*, Bing Crosby's only full-length collaboration with the Count Basie orchestra, has always struck me as something of a missed opportunity, in some ways comparable to Frank Sinatra's 1968 Reprise album with Duke Ellington, *Francis A. and Edward K.* On paper, the idea of pairing Basie's perfectly oiled, high-octane swing machine with one of the most jazz-influenced voices in pop music history sounds certainly like a winner, but the finished LP, though containing some exciting highlights, cannot be accurately described as one of the most memorable entries in the vast discographies of either headliner. And the problem isn't the very adept Sam Nestico arrangements, which are perfectly in sync with Basie's reliably exciting post-New Testament band of the 1960s and '70s, nor is it the orchestra, which sounds as tight as ever throughout the project. No, the foremost complaint that can be raised regarding this album is undoubtedly the choice of material. With Basie and Crosby headlining, do we really need versions of "Gentle on My Mind" and "Snowbird," or yet another reading of "Little Green

Apples," which Bing had tackled just a few years earlier? Does "Sunrise, Sunset," with its thoughtful lyrics about the passage of time and the circle of life, need to be recast as a swinger? Wouldn't it at least sound better as a ballad, something akin to what Johnny Hartman does with it on his album *The Voice That Is*? As a listener, I can't help but wish that someone had thought to direct Bing and the Count toward the more familiar territory of swing and the Great American Songbook rather than toward their more contemporary selections. But alas, that didn't happen, and so the album, as a whole, suffers accordingly.

Not to say that *Bing 'n' Basie* isn't without its positive aspects, of course. For instance, in his book *The Crosby Years*, British producer Ken Barnes underscores what he perceives as the many high spots of the album, as well as praising it overall: "Of course, it's not Bing's best album, but there is enough good singing and playing to merit a few hearty cheers—and it was certainly better than anything he had done on record for years." If Barnes is comparing this album to, say, *Hey Jude / Hey Bing*, then I must concur that there is a definite improvement; but if I describe this summit as a missed opportunity, it is precisely because the repertoire doesn't quite rise to such a historic occasion. Undoubtedly, another problem lies in the fact that, for whatever reason, Bing did not record the songs live in the studio with the band; rather, in three separate sessions (March 14-16, 1972, at Coast Recorders in San Francisco) he overdubbed his vocals onto tracks previously laid down by the Basie men, a practice that the crooner usually didn't favor. Consequently, it's little wonder that there is a certain disconnect between the singer and the band on some of the tunes (particularly on the track that kicks off the record, "Gentle on My Mind") which is quite disappointing if we consider who is sitting at the piano and who is standing behind the microphone.

Bing looks on as Count Basie lays down the instrumental tracks for the album.

Barnes rightly notes in his book that the album opener, "Gentle on My Mind," is "one of the weakest tracks, vocally," which may be because this John Hartford country tune—recorded by everyone from Dean Martin to Elvis Presley—simply isn't suited for Bing. Nestico actually seems to have Dino's version in mind for the arrangement, and though it's an engaging chart, Crosby himself doesn't sound very engaged with Hartford's folksy poetry about wheat fields, clothes lines, junkyards, and highways. Something similar happens with Ray Stevens's "Everything Is Beautiful," a simple tune that suffers from a rather formulaic, predictable lyric, from which Bing gleans as much as he possibly can. Things pick up on "Gonna Build a Mountain," a jumpy little ditty from the team of Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley with which Crosby seems completely comfortable. He handles the vocals with great ease, and the obbligato-filled chart also benefits from an exciting trumpet solo that is duly welcome at this point in the album.

Bing also sounds relaxed and secure on "Sunrise, Sunset," the Jerry Bock-Sheldon Harnick composition from *Fiddler on the Roof*, though, as noted earlier, it probably would have worked better as a ballad. The arrangement is solid, and vocally this comes across as one of the strongest tracks in the album. Of the remaining selections, arranger Nestico contributes two songs to the proceedings, with lyrics written by none other than Johnny Mercer, who also provides the liner notes for *Bing 'n' Basie*. The better of the two is "Hangin' Loose," an easy-swinging melody that is perfect for the latter-day Bing, who knows exactly what to do with it. Crosby is, indeed, in a "mellow groove"

tackling this typically happy-go-lucky Mercer lyric, à la "Gone Fishin'," which even includes a golfing reference to Lee Trevino. From the pen of Henry Mancini and the Bergmans (Alan and Marilyn, that is) comes "All His Children," which is an odd choice at best. Bing is treading into very contemporary ground here, the song having been a hit for country star Charley Pride the very same year as this Crosby-Basie summit and having been featured in the Paul Newman-directed film *Sometimes a Great Notion*. This is a good example of why I consider this album a missed opportunity: while Bing's performance is actually quite enjoyable, surely there was more appropriate material for Der Bingle and the Count to commit to wax.

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DAYBREAK RECORDS
Tro Essex Music
DAS 401
℗ 1973
DAS 401-A
GONNA BUILD A MOUNTAIN
(Newley, Ericusse)
BING CROSBY
And The Count Basie Orchestra
Arr. & Conducted by Sammy Nestico
Produced by Sonny Burke
MANUFACTURED AND DISTRIBUTED BY PYE RECORDS ATV HOUSE, GT. CUMBERLAND PLACE, W.1.

As we flip the record over, what we find is arguably one of the most successful tunes in the album, though on paper it again sounds like an odd choice. Albeit synonymous with Christmas music, Bing didn't actually record too many overtly religious songs outside of the holiday genre. And yet, the gospel-inflected "Put Your Hand in the Hand," by Canadian songwriter Gene MacLellan, is an exception, and a memorable one at that, owing to the excellent swinging arrangement by Nestico and to Bing's convincing delivery of the lyrics, which makes you wish he had done more recordings in a similar vein. The Prince Edward Island native MacLellan is also responsible for the next song, "Snowbird," another popular choice recorded by everyone from Anne Murray to Elvis Presley to Burl Ives (his is an unusual but interesting version) to Chris Connor to even Perry Como. The arrangement is good enough, but once again, Crosby sounds disengaged with the song, as though he were simply going through the motions, and the result is lackluster at best. For some reason, Bing remakes Bob Russell's "Little Green Apples," which he had already cut for *Hey Jude / Hey Bing* three years earlier, and actually greatly improves upon that version. Re-imagined as a swinger by Nestico, the tune works much better, and Crosby sounds quite at ease, even playing with the beat here and there and making it easier to put up with the rather forgettable lyrics.

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DAYBREAK RECORDS
Croma Music
DAS 401
DAS 401-B
℗ 1973
SUGAR DON'T YOU KNOW
(Bellson, Hayes, Lee)
BING CROSBY
And The Count Basie Orchestra
Arr. & Conducted by Sammy Nestico
Produced by Sonny Burke
MANUFACTURED AND DISTRIBUTED BY PYE RECORDS ATV HOUSE, GT. CUMBERLAND PLACE, W.1.

As we near the final stages of the album, "Sugar Don't You Know" offers some welcome respite from the decidedly uptempo feel of the whole project. This beautiful swinging ballad written by the trio of Peggy Lee, Louis Bellson, and Jack Hayes remains one of the most successful performances in the LP. The collaboration is then brought to a close by the satisfying "Have a Nice Day," the second Nestico-Mercer number, originally a Basie instrumental with newly minted lyrics that makes the listener wish the pair had contributed some more songs to the album. Incidentally, Bing and Basie cut another track during these sessions, a swinging take on The Weavers' "If I Had a Hammer," which didn't make it onto the record and that to this day remains inexplicably unissued, although it can be easily found on YouTube. Its exclusion from the album has long puzzled Crosby fans, particularly because it wouldn't have been out of place among the rest, and one wonders if Bing perhaps decided to leave it out because of its overtly political message. Hopefully it will finally see the light of day on a future CD reissue of *Bing 'n' Basie* because it's actually worth a listen.

Upon its original release, the collaboration between Crosby and Basie garnered some very positive reviews. Howard Lucraft probably exaggerates when writing in *Variety* that "Bing sounds better today to many than in his Paul Whiteman days," but he does fairly praise "Sugar Don't You Know" and describes the album as "highly effective—simple with charm." An anonymous *Down Beat* reviewer, completely overlooking all of

Crosby's 1960s output, considers *Bing 'n' Basie* his best work since his pairing with Buddy Bregman in the fifties and calls him "a swinging stylist" whose deeper voice has "enriched his sound." Even the great jazz critic Leonard Feather is encouraging in his review for the *L.A. Times*, praising the band and, in particular, the performance of "Have a Nice Day." Still, most reviewers at the time seemed to bemoan the fact that Bing didn't record the tracks together with the band, which would have made the finished product fresher and more attractive. Interestingly, it appears that the two headliners had somewhat opposed views of these sessions. In his biography, *Good Morning Blues*, Basie shares fond memories of working with Crosby but is quoted as saying that the recordings "didn't run out as great as I had hoped. I don't really know what happened that everything didn't come off better than it did." In light of these words, one wonders whether the Count wished the song selection had been different, perhaps jazzier. As for Bing, in a letter to a British fan written shortly after the original release of the LP, he is enthusiastic as ever about working with Basie and about the finished product: "I think there are some great arrangements in the album," he rightly states, "and of course, the Basie band, to me, is one of the finest. They have been together so long, they play almost like one man, when they are in an ensemble section."

Overall, I tend to agree with both assessments. The arrangements by Sam Nestico are excellent, and the musicianship and performance of the Basie orchestra are, as usual, flawless. However, some of the song choices are questionable at best, and Bing's vocals suffer accordingly: on some of the tracks, he is able to hit the right groove, and as listeners we are right there along with him; on others, he seems to be singing almost mechanically, without much conviction, and as a result we lose interest. That is why I don't hesitate to describe the record as a missed opportunity, one that could have and should have been done differently, and better. Whatever we ultimately think of the album, however, it's still a summit between an excellent jazz singer and one of the best swing organizations in history. As such, the Emarcy CD reissue (alas, sans "If I Had a Hammer") belongs on the shelf of all serious Crosby fans and deserves to be dusted off from time to time. Because, after all, jazz / pop albums are what they are and not what we wish they had been.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez

The Edsel Show

Ron McBride recently obtained some photo proof sheets from rehearsals of the 1957 Edsel show and he has kindly shared them with us.

By way of background, on Sunday, October 13, 1957 (5:00–6:00 p.m.) Bing hosted *The Edsel Show*, a live television program (for the East Coast) on CBS. He had avoided live television appearances for some years and his previous TV outings had all been filmed in advance. With Ford launching its new Edsel car, they wanted a major variety show to help publicise it. They turned to Bing and in agreeing to do it, he arranged for the program to be "produced" by Gonzaga University so that the profits (estimated at $250,000) could go to them in a tax efficient way. He surrounded himself with old friends—Louis Armstrong, Rosemary Clooney, Lindsay Crosby—plus Bill Morrow as the producer-writer. Buddy Cole was responsible for musical supervision, and John Scott Trotter did some of the arrangements.

Also whilst lunching at the Brown Derby shortly after signing to do the Edsel show, Bing spotted Frank Sinatra at another table. He related the story of what happened next. "I waved to him and he waved back. He completed lunch before I did and stopped at my table on his way out. He had read *Variety* and knew about the Edsel show and said something to me about it being a great showcase for newcomers, since most of the money is going to Gonzaga." It occurred to Bing that perhaps he could entice Sinatra to perform for nothing if he, in turn, would agree to appear on one of Sinatra's specials at some future date. "I propositioned Frank, and right there, over a demitasse, we shook hands." Bing soon appeared on Frank's TV show which became known as "Happy Holidays with Bing and Frank".

The program won the *Look* magazine TV Award for "Best Musical Show, 1957" and was nominated for an Emmy as the "Best Single Program of the Year". It had a Trendex rating of 40.8. (A Trendex rating represented the percentage of TV homes in fifteen major cities, including New York, that were tuned to the program specified. Trendex telephoned 1000 homes during each half hour period.)

The Edsel Show originated at CBS Television City in Los Angeles and was the first entertainment Video Tape program recorded there. It was a live broadcast to the East Coast, but was "tape delayed" for re-broadcast three hours later in the Pacific Time Zone. A "backup" kinescope had been recorded and was played backed simultaneously with the Video Tape in the event that the new technology failed. It became the second highest rated show of the year and fifty-three million viewers watched it. *Variety* liked it too.

> The Edsel Show, a special kick-off for Ford's new line of cars on tv, was a smooth, fast ride all the way. In fact, without even seeming to try, it shaped up as one of video's top musical offerings, in the same class as the Mary Martin-Ethel Merman layout several years ago, on the 'Ford Jubilee' show.
>
> This time, it was the tandem of Bing Crosby

and Frank Sinatra, two savvy pros who were at the top of their form. For Crosby, it was his best tv showing to date and for those who remember live radio way back when, Der Bingle generated the same easy charm that was responsible for his long-time run on the AM kilocycles. Sinatra, likewise, displayed a finesse and a sureness that bespeaks his multi-faceted showbiz experience. In addition, the one-hour stanza showcased, among others, another veteran performer, Louis Armstrong, in some nifty routines.

But basically, it was Crosby and Sinatra, in a freewheeling songalog and an informal script that never got in the way of the singing. Working solo, duo and trio (with Rosemary Clooney), they covered several dozen songs, most of them in quickie versions. In the biggest production of a show that was marked with a minimum of production frills, Crosby and Sinatra did a song 'take-off' on 'Around the World in 80 Days', winding up with Bob Hope entering for a short routine on 'We're Off on the Road to Morocco'

Crosby's number with Armstrong and his combo on 'Now You Has Jazz' was a crackerjack getaway. Satchmo returned again for a nifty rundown of 'The Birth of the Blues' with Sinatra. Miss Clooney had one solo slot on a show ballad midway in the show, while Lindsay Crosby, son of Bing, delivered, 'In the Middle of an Island', in fair style, with backing from the Four Preps. In the hoofing division, Mr. Conn & Mr. Mann, two slick tapsters were on and off fast.

For the final quarter-hour, Crosby, Sinatra and Miss Clooney joined in a clever medley of romantic oldies. As with the rest of the show, this routine was handled with a breezy comedic touch that didn't strain for laughs.

The new Edsel cars were effectively plugged via some film clips and some asides from Crosby and Sinatra. The latter also appeared to slide in a plug for his upcoming show for Chesterfield on the TV network.
(*Variety,* October 16, 1957)

C. Gayle Warnock, former Public Relations Director for Ford, writing in his book, *The Edsel Affair . . . What Went Wrong?* gave further details.

...Crosby was a perfectionist and came to the first-day rehearsals with his lines solidly memorized. When he was not on stage, he sat in the theater, seemingly relaxed, but always with an eye on the action. Sinatra lost no time in learning his lines, either, as well as the lines of everyone who appeared in his scenes, but Rosemary Clooney seemed awed by the company she was keeping and broke up at some of the one-liners the two male singers tossed at each other. Louis Armstrong was a basket case, unable to remember his lines and seemingly unable to respond to cues. He failed so many times during rehearsal to come on stage on cue that his number was pre-recorded.

During the telecast (live to the East and Midwest) a surprised Sinatra found himself holding a one-man conversation with Armstrong, reciting first his own line, then helping the nervous trumpet player remember his. To those who had attended the rehearsals, the exchange was hilarious.

The show was a slick, professional piece of work produced and written by Bill Morrow. Even when the sparkling lines were garbled, as they were with Armstrong and Sinatra, they came off with spontaneity. Played in front of CBS prop room scenery (nothing new was constructed), the playing costs to the producer, Gonzaga University, were less than $100,000.

As soon as the performance ended, we threw a celebration party at Chasen's, and with an exuberance usually shown by a first-time sponsor, we invited the entire cast to attend. Virtually everyone showed up, with the notable exception of Sinatra and Bob Hope, who made a very brief and surprise cameo appearance in the show. Sinatra, who had brought Lauren Bacall to the performance, apologized and said he had a previous engagement. Hope was off right after the show on another personal appearance. All of the other principals showed. Crosby brought his date of the evening, Inger Stevens, a beautiful Swedish girl who had just made her American debut in Man on Fire, an undistinguished film with der Bingle.

Much to everyone's surprise, Crosby arrived at the party sans toupee. Benson Ford was so shocked by the sight of the bald-headed singer that he asked me if I would ask Bing to pose with him. When I told Crosby of Ford's request, the gracious artist laughingly agreed, but only on one condition: "Providing you keep the prints locked up someplace and see that the negatives are destroyed. I don't want to see a picture of me and Ben in one of your company publications," he warned.

The Edsel Show was telecast live to New York and the Midwest, then kinescoped to the West Coast three hours later. I figured this might give us time to get the New York Times review of the show before it ended in California. So we set up two or three TV sets at Chasen's and invited everyone to remain for the re-broadcast.

John Sattler had made arrangements for the review to be read to me from the Times city room at 11:30 PM, EDT, halfway through the West Coast telecast. The arrangement went off on schedule and immediately after the show I read to the audience the Monday Times. The critic found the show most entertaining, of course, and the cast and guests cheered the review heartily. They called for Crosby to take a bow, which the crooner did in his modest way.

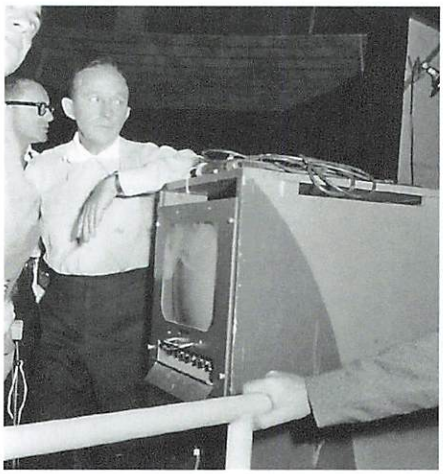
The television show may well have been the only real success Edsel ever had. Several months later, I

received a kinescope of The Edsel Show, a gift from the singer. I had not asked for it, nor had Crosby offered it to me. The film came as a complete surprise, with a note that said simply, "Thanks, Bing."

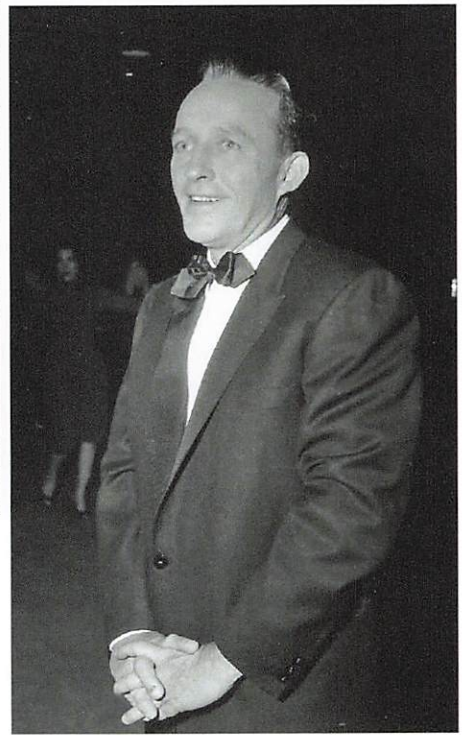
Brief excerpts from the show are included in the new Time Life DVD set. What a pity there weren't more!

Our grateful thanks to Ron McBride for sharing these rare photos which show the participants rehearsing for the show.

Rehearsing for the Edsel Show



Rehearsing for the Edsel Show



The Harasen Line

Veteran broadcaster Lorne Harasen from Regina, Saskatchewan interviewed Bing on many occasions and he has been re-listening to the tapes of those interviews. Here are some more memories of those meetings.

The lyrics of a popular yuletide song begin with these words "We need a little Christmas, right this very minute" and Bing Crosby would deliver for decades. Of course "White Christmas" comes to mind first. Then you remember radio's popular series "Christmas Sing with Bing", the Hollywood Palace Christmas Specials, the Crosby Christmas Specials on television and then *White Christmas*, the movie which is an annual item to this day on TV and in movie houses.

In the 1960s when I first interviewed Bing he told me that Larry his brother who had access ***"to the accounts"*** found that Bing's recording of "Silent Night" at that time had actually out sold "White Christmas". In the interval "White Christmas" has become the all-time leader. When Irving Berlin wrote the song for the movie *Holiday Inn* in the late 1930s Bing said ***"We didn't expect the song to be a big seller because we didn't give it any special production and it was just thrown into the movie."***

I think it could be safely said that Bing on many recordings has probably recorded every Christmas song and carol that is known to man. When "White Christmas" is discussed with Bing he never fails to express his gratitude to the writer and he did so when I talked to him saying, ***"I'm eternally grateful to Mr. Berlin for writing it and providing it for me."***

I should note that in setting up my first interview with Bing I told his brother Larry who handled Bing's publicity that Bing was as much a part of Christmas as Santa Claus and the carols. Larry said, ***"Tell him that"*** which I did.

To the oft repeated concern that Christmas had become too commercialized Bing had a simple and sensible observation. He said the people and not the commercial interests can control that by not spending, celebrating or accumulating to excess. That was significant for a man who could get enough material things than most people could.

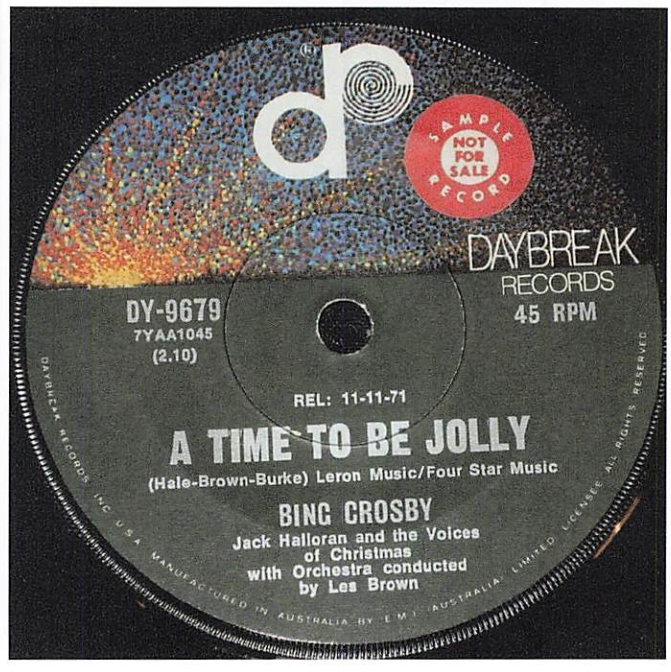
Mr. Crosby said his family celebrated Christmas in the traditional way which is family, turkey and gifts. He said he gave his wife ***"something nice"*** and she in turn gave ***"me something nice and the children would usually get something useful such as something to wear and then they would also be given something they could have some fun with. It all depends on you as far as commercialization is concerned."*** As a practicing Roman Catholic, Bing would have that part of Christmas in order

The Crosbys were early birds as far as Christmas shopping was concerned. Bing said they would start in early autumn and Kathryn would have everything wrapped and sent off by November 1st. Bob and Dolores Hope were on the Crosby Christmas shopping list and Bing said that was usually something for the house like silverware or antique china. During one Christmas interview Bing said he was going to give Bob a key chain as a gift.

Earlier on Christmas Eve, Bing and Kathryn and the children would sing carols at five or six homes of friends.

Later Kathryn would prepare a dinner for their household staff. The meal was usually pheasant, duck and quail which Bing would bring home from his hunting trips. The staff were able to bring a guest and some 45 or 50 people would sit down to the meal. Bing said the dinner was an international affair which included an English butler whose previous job was at Buckingham Palace, an Irish nanny, a Japanese gardener and a Russian cook among others. There would be presents for all of them.

Christmas day would be a family dinner which would mark the start of a week of festivities with family and friends. This was the usual routine except for one Christmas which was a small immediate family celebration at the Crosby ranch near the Oregon border. Bing said there were horses, Charolais beef cattle, ***"a nice trout stream"*** and most importantly for the children, SNOW! A White Christmas indeed.



Bing Crosby told me that one of his great wishes was to find "***some really good new Christmas songs. That wish came true in the early 1970s when arranger, composer, big band leader and producer Sonny Burke came up with some outstanding numbers which we recorded under the album title A Time to Be Jolly.***" I can attest to that review. Every song in that album was first class.

A promotional single of the album title came to the radio station where I was employed and it was played throughout the Christmas season but one problem. You couldn't find a music store that carried it. Since then I have looked for it in San Francisco, Toronto Ontario and even London England. Nothing. Fortunately my friends in the International Club Crosby have provided me with a recording of "A Time to Be Jolly".

My wish to all particularly to all Crosby fans is for a warm, joyful Christmas and maybe thank the good Lord that his gifts of artists for the rest of us has included Bing Crosby.

Lorne Harasen

(Editor: Lorne's book about his long career is titled, The Harasen Line, A Broadcaster's Memoir published by FriesenPress, Suite 300 – 990 Fort St., Victoria British Columbia, V8V 3K2 Canada (www.friesenpress.com, e-book $4.99, paperback $18.99. Hardcover $29.99). To order it, either go to the publisher direct or order from Lorne at 86 Marquis Crescent, Regina Sk. S4S 6J9 Canada.

We shall have another instalment from Lorne in our next issue.)

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries Please send all advertisements to the Editor

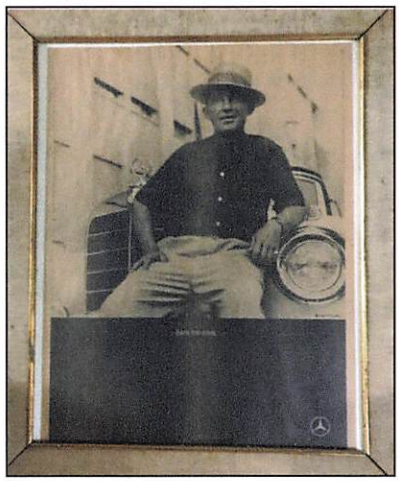
Gord Atkinson, 715-2018 Robertson Rd., Nepean, Ottawa, ON, K2H 1C6, Canada.

Gord's latest book "The Golden Years of Entertainment" is available to Crosby collectors for $20.00 US or Canadian funds or equivalent in British pounds. Write to Gord direct.

John Bassett, "Bingville", 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex SS4 1RZ, UK

"Alternate Bing Crosby – Vol. 2". Issued as a companion volume to Colin Pugh's invaluable 1988 publication, this 67-page edition continues the story by examining every alternate Take discovered since that first edition. In total, 131 titles are dealt with in this A4 size publication, currently available at £7.50 (including postage). All remittances in £ sterling should be made payable to John Bassett and sent to him at the address above.

Mike Kaptanis, Yonkers, New York, USA (email: MMGKAPTAN@aol.com)



For Sale: Enlarged photo of Bing leaning against a Mercedes, in a pose from the early 1950's. The photo is nicely framed and the frame measures 20 1/2 by 25 inches. The framed photo will be shipped safely and insured. Would like to have $50 for the photo and then shipping and insurance will be $35. Great item of interest for a Bing fan. If interested, contact Mike by email.

John Thornell, Gloucester, UK Tel: 01452 610455, email jeannette.thornell@yahoo.com

About 250 Bing Crosby 78s, in wooden case, some rare. £150.

Lenora Pasch, Sun Lakes, Arizona, USA (email: lpasch@gmail.com)

Lenora writes: "Bob has 2 Bing Crosby animated singing Christmas statues (dolls). They are mechanic. The mouth moves, microphone moves, head turns. Bing sings "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" and "White Christmas". They are 18" tall and the base is 8" circumference. It runs on batteries. They are in the original box and are in new condition. I am attaching a picture. There are also some YouTube video's showing them in operation (not our videos). Bob would like to sell them for $50.00 U.S. plus shipping. There are a couple on eBay for $52.95 but they are used. Bob's are new, never out of the box. I would appreciate any help you can provide in notifying members. He is going to list them on eBay but wanted to give members the 1st option."

Malcolm Macfarlane, address on inside front cover.

Jeremy Rose and your Editor are dealing with the sale of the collections of the late Gwen Harvey and John Norris Wood. It is not practical to list everything that is still available but selected items are shown below. Sale proceeds from both collections will go to the ICC. **Prices quoted do not include postage so please bear this in mind.**

DVDs

(Region 1 – NTSC)

The Legendary Bing Crosby $7.50
Bing Crosby Rediscovered $7.50
Rhythm on the River / Rhythm on the Range $7.50
Emperor Waltz / A Connecticut Yankee $7.50
Birth of the Blues / Blue Skies $7.50
Pennies from Heaven $7.50
Bing Crosby – The Television Specials Vol. 1 $7.50

(Region 2 – PAL)

Holiday Inn (with Ken Barnes extras) £3
Road to Bali / The Road to Hollywood £2
The Road to Hong Kong £3
White Christmas £2

CDs

Bing Crosby – 10th Anniversary Collection (booklet missing) (3-CD set) £3
Bing 'N' Basie (front cover missing) £3
The Chronological Bing Crosby – vols. 12 to 20 (cover for 20 missing) and 38. £2 each
Gord Atkinson's "A Crosby Christmas" part 1 - £1
"His Legendary Years 1931-1957 (Just the 4 discs - no box or booklet) £5 the lot.
The Krafty Young Bing – vols. 1, 2 and 4. (KMH songs from Bar-One International) £1 each.
Rare Original Survivors (cover missing). £1

Books

Alternate Bing Crosby (Colin Pugh) £1
Bing Crosby –A Pocketful of Dreams. The Early Years 1903-1940 (softcover, some wear) £2
Bing Crosby – A Pocketful of Dreams – The Early Years 1903-1940 (Giddins, hardback) £5
Bing – The Authorised Biography (Charles Thompson) (softcover and hardcover) £2 each
Bing Crosby – The Hollow Man (hardback and softcover) £1 each
Bing Crosby – the illustrated biography (Michael Freedland) £2
Bing Crosby's Commercial Recordings – From 78s to CDs (2003) £1
Call Me Lucky (Bing Crosby – Da Capo reissue 1993) £3
Call Me Lucky (original 1953 UK edition with dust jacket) £5
The Complete Crosby (Charles Thompson) £1
The Crosby Years (Ken Barnes) £5
The Definitive Bing Crosby Discography (Wig Wiggins and Jim Reilly - 2014) £3
The Fabulous Life of Bing Crosby (George Carpozi Jr) £1
Going My Way – Bing Crosby and American Culture (re Hofstra Conferene) £10
The One and Only Bing (Bob Thomas) (hardcover and softcover) £1.50 each
The Road to Hollywood (Fred Reynolds) £5
Troubadour - Bing Crosby and the Invention of Pop Singing (Norman Wolfe) £5

Sheet music (£1 each – condition varies)

All Alone (non-Bing) – Along the Navajo Trail – Aren't You Glad You're You – At Your Command - Beautiful Dreamer – Be Honest with Me – Bing Crosby's Musical Anniversary Song album – The Bing Crosby Portrait Album – Blue Hawaii – Chattanoogie Shoe Shine Boy – Day by Day – Dear Old Donegal – Deep in the Heart of Texas – Empty Saddles – If I Had My Way – If You Please – I'm an Old Cowhand – In the Land of Beginning Again – I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams – I've Got My Eyes on You (non-Bing) – Just a Pray'r Away – Just an Echo in the Valley – Little Dutch Mill – Love in Bloom – Only Forever – Paper Doll – Sunday, Monday or Always – Sweet Leilani – Swinging on a Star – Thanks – Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral – The Day After Forever – The Kiss in Your Eyes – The One Rose – There's a Gold Mine in the Sky – Welcome to My Dream – When You Make Love to Me – White Christmas – You Keep Coming Back Like a Song – You're Sensational (non-Bing)

We are open to offers for the lot in bulk.

Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: deryk@net2000.com.au)

Bi-monthly newsletters are issued by the Society and they can now be received in PDF form by email if desired. The regular film nights continue and in August the main attraction was *Man on Fire* supported by the 1967 TV show *A Little Bit of Irish*. October brought *King of Jazz* as the featured film with the first part of a 1995 BBC documentary "The Hollywood Sound – Music for the Movies" in support. A further film night is scheduled for 11 December and the second part of "The Hollywood Sound" will be shown then together with another film. The venue continues to be the Library behind the Collingwood Town Hall complex at 11 Stanton St., Abbotsford, Melbourne.

Internet sites:

BING magazine

This contains a considerable amount of reference material all of which is being updated as new information arises. The site has been visited 905 times in the last four months. Since the site was redesigned back in 2008 by Howard Crossland, it has been visited no less than 43,876 times. See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

Crosby Fan World

This bulletin board type site is at:
http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/
Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker.

Other sites well worth a visit are:

www.BingCrosby.com - run by Bing Crosby Enterprises

Bing Crosby on Facebook - run by Bing Crosby Enterprises

Bing Crosby House (on Facebook)
Bing Crosby on Twitter - @Bingconstantly and @Bing_Crosby are the links..
Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby—"The Old Groaner"—The Bing Crosby Fan Page – a Facebook group.
Jack Boyle's "Bing for the Seasons – a Facebook group.
The Early Bing Crosby 1926-1936 a Facebook group administered by Mike Pearl
Jon Oye's Blog – run by ICC stalwart Jon Oye. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/

The Bing Crosby News Archive - David Lobosco runs this blog at http://bingfan03.blogspot.co.uk/

Steven Lewis' Bing Crosby Internet Museum - See http://www.stevenlewis.info/crosby/

OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com, website: www.flias.com/) - A magazine called *Laine Lines* is published three times a year.

International Al Jolson Society, c/o Sandra K. Gerloff, 419 Glenwood Drive, Douglassville, PA 19518, USA (website: www.jolson.org - also on Facebook). A different Jolson radio show can be heard via the web site each week.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, email: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

Memory Lane, P O Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England. (www.memorylane.org.uk)
The acclaimed quarterly magazine for lovers of 1920s, 1930s and 1940s music. A *"must"* for 78 RPM collectors. Initial annual subscription only £10 (UK) or £15 (overseas) for readers of BING magazine. (Normal price £16 - UK, £22 - overseas.)
Sinatra Music Society - Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-899771, www.sinatramusicsociety.com/). This was founded in 1955. A quarterly magazine called *Perfectly Frank* is issued. Fees within the UK are £15 a year; £19 for European membership and £23 for the rest of the world.

Books 'n' Bing

Swinging on a Star – The War Years 1940-1946

By Gary Giddins, published by Little Brown and Company, 736 pages, ISBN-10: 0316887927, ISBN-13: 978-0316887922, Available from Amazon - $25 in the USA, £35 in the UK. Also available as a Kindle.

This superb book is now available and Ken Crossland reviews it for us in his Crosbyana column later in this issue. There are 100 photographs, usually 3 or 4 to a page, some in colour and some completely new to your Editor.

Gary Giddins has been in action promoting his book at events in Spokane, San Francisco, Philadelphia and New York.

It would make a wonderful Christmas present in case your family needs ideas!

Uncle Bing and Our Family

Bing's nephew Howard Crosby and Bob Ferguson (who was married to Bing's niece Katie) have put together a very interesting article about their interactions with Bing over the years. Members will recall that Katie (Catherine Ann Ferguson) passed away earlier this year and we carried her obituary in our last issue. Howard kicks off first.

After 179 issues of BING magazine through the summer of 2018, there may not be a whole lot of new stories to tell about Bing Crosby. Of course, the newly released "Swinging on a Star: The War Years" by Gary Giddins is going to provide all of us with a whole new perspective on Uncle Bing's selfless contribution to America's war effort in the 1940's. (Confession: We've read a galley proof, so we won't spoil it for you!) But maybe the stories about Uncle Bing's interaction with his brother Ted's family over the years can provide some new material....

Edward J "Ted" Crosby and Harry L "Bing" Crosby were the two brothers closest in age as they grew up. When my grandfather Harry built the house on Sharp Avenue in Spokane across from the main building at Gonzaga University, Bing and Ted slept together in a small sleeping porch that faced the campus. They had two older brothers, Laurence and Everett, and two younger sisters, Catherine and Mary Rose. (Youngest brother Bob didn't show up until 1913) Smack in the middle of a big Catholic family, the two boys were quite different. Bing was an athlete, swimming champ, baseball player, and budding golfer who took up the game as a caddie at the new Downriver golf course in northwest Spokane. By his early teens, he had developed a real interest in music as well, and started down a road that would ultimately lead somewhere. But that didn't leave a lot of time to concentrate on his scholastic efforts, and although he was gifted with an unusually bright intellect, let's just say maybe his focus was elsewhere....

An early photo of the Crosby family. Bing is on the left at the front, with Ted next to him.

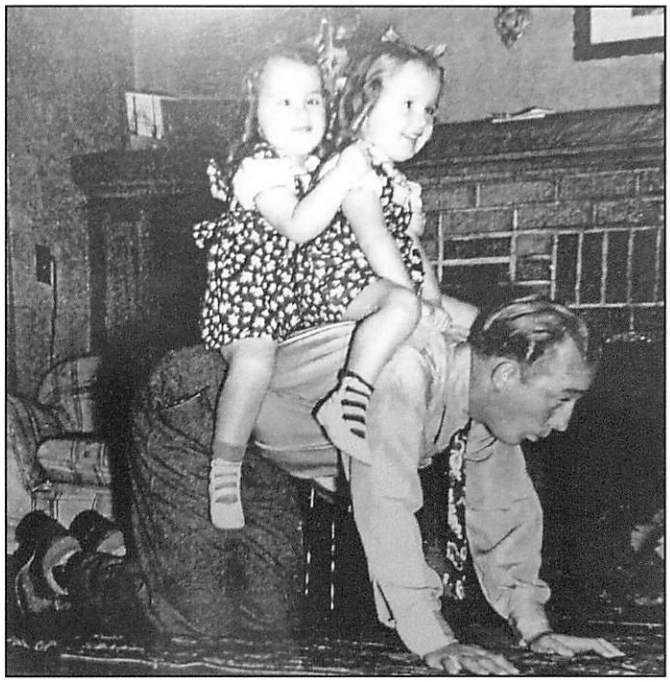
Ted, on the other hand, was a brilliant student from the time he was belatedly enrolled in First grade at the age of 8. By the time he graduated from High School, he had skipped three grades and was first in his class. He was a true bookworm, with side interests in the new technologies of the day. In 1915, as a boy of 15, he built one of the first wireless radio receivers in all of Spokane! As times were tough for the growing Crosbys, all of the children were expected to bring home some money: mowing lawns, delivering newspapers, raking leaves, babysitting, taking in sewing, caddying at the golf course, whatever. Except Ted. When the others would ask my Irish grandmother, "why doesn't Ted have to get a job, or do any chores?" Grandma would answer, "leave Ted alone and let him study, he's going to be a priest!" Of course, it was expected that any good Irish-American family with lots of sons would deliver one to the church!

Ted graduated from Gonzaga University in 1920 with a bachelor's degree in Philosophy, at the age of 20. He would be the only one of his siblings to actually graduate from college. Uncle Bing came close, but by the time he dropped out of Gonzaga in his fourth year as a pre-law student in 1924, Ted had obtained a Master's Degree in English, and was working at a journalist at the Spokesman Review in Spokane.

In 1924 Ted married Hazel Burke of Spokane, and two years later, the couple delivered Kate and Harry Crosby their first grandchild, Patricia Antonia Crosby in April. Not long after, they moved into a nice new home on south Wall Street in Spokane, and in 1928 Ted was hired as a public relations executive with the local utility, the Washington Water Power. Clearly at this point in time, even though he hadn't fulfilled his mother's ambition to become a Catholic priest, Ted had

leapfrogged his older brothers (Larry was a bookkeeper in Seattle, Everett was selling used cars in Santa Monica) and was the star of the family. Bing was now a travelling minstrel with the Whiteman Band, living from paycheck to paycheck, and from speakeasy to speakeasy.

But in September of 1931, Bing's appearance on a nationwide CBS radio program launched an entertainment career that would never recede in his lifetime. Within a very short period of time, he was America's biggest star, in the movies, on the radio, and of course on records. When Ted and Hazel's twin girls Katie and Dixie were born in May of 1934, Uncle Bing was the biggest star in the world, and he travelled back to Spokane to stand as Godfather to his new little niece, Catherine Anne Crosby (Katie).



Uncle Bing with the twins.

During the 1930's, my grandparents, Kate and Harry, moved to Los Angeles, and all of the rest of their children moved to California as well. Uncle Everett had been Bing's earliest manager, and then later Uncle Larry moved to LA to work for his younger brother. Only Ted remained behind in Spokane. His early success as an executive with the Water Power, an enviable job in the Depression, and his growing family of three little girls kept him firmly planted in Spokane.

By the mid 1940's Uncle Bing's fame and success had reached an even higher zenith, and Ted's marriage to Hazel dissolved, creating a period of upheaval and stress within his family. Ted left his position with the Water Power, and took a job in Washington, DC as a lobbyist for the utility industry. At the time my oldest sister Toni was entering college, and given the family stress, Uncle Bing stepped in with some financial assistance for her. Not long after that, with the war over, the Del Mar racetrack was scheduled to reopen, and Bing offered Ted a position with the track in Del Mar. After a short time in California, there was an acrimonious split between Ted and Bing, and Ted returned to Spokane. Gary Giddins' new book does an outstanding and even handed discussion of the events surrounding this split, so I'll leave the details to him. Nevertheless, the two brothers would not be on speaking terms for the next 15 years…

Ted Crosby at work.

Meanwhile, in December of 1949 Ted married my mother, Margaret Mattes. I was born in July of 1952, and some of my earliest memories were of seeing my uncle on TV or hearing him on the radio. When I went to school as a six year old at St. Mary's in the Spokane Valley, I was surrounded by the other children who wanted to know, "Is it true you are Bing Crosby's nephew?" I think that was the first time it dawned on me that not everyone had an uncle who was a famous movie star!

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Over to you, Bob. Thanks, Howard. Well, I grew up during the Depression in the small lumber town of Dover, Idaho, in a tiny house without indoor plumbing. Dad worked long hours in the local mill, and my sister and brother and I had very few opportunities in that impoverished little Idaho town. I played baseball in school, which I loved, but it was hard for a "Dover river rat" as we were called, to imagine much of a big future outside of the lumber town by the river. I certainly never dreamed I would be married to Bing Crosby's niece!

One of the most critical decisions of my life came when I decided to leave Sandpoint High School, (we were bussed in from Dover} and enroll at Gonzaga Prep, a Jesuit high school in Spokane. It wasn't easy. I boarded with a local family, worked numerous jobs to pay my way, and I got the kind of education that just wasn't possible in Sandpoint. From there, I enrolled at Gonzaga University, and with my interest in science, majored in

Physics. The ROTC program helped pay my way through Gonzaga University, and my best friend at the time, Andy Dufner, was dating a beautiful girl from neighboring Holy Names College, Katie Crosby. When we were seniors, Andy announced one day that he was planning to enter the order and become a Jesuit priest. "Why don't you date Katie?" he asked. I thought that was a great idea, and then took the opportunity to introduce Katie to the entire Gonzaga student body. Her uncle Bing had arranged for Red Nichols and his Five Pennies, to perform at a convocation. As MC of the program I took the opportunity to ask Katie to stand as the student body thanked Bing with a standing ovation. After that we dated several times and before leaving for active duty at Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD for my first assignment as an officer in the U. S. Army Ordnance Corp. We agreed to stay in touch. That led to an encouraging letter from Katie and a visit to see her at Christmas time. From then on Katie and I carried on our courtship by writing letters to each other every day until we were married! She even managed to convince her mother to let her visit me when I was attending the Ordnance Guided Missile School in Huntsville Alabama. Her stay led to a proposal on Lookout Mountain in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and in the spring a ring in mail!

During that same period, Katie's twin sister Dixie had entered the same religious order, the Sisters of the Holy Names, as had my sister Evelyn. It turned out that Evelyn and Dixie knew each other even before Katie and I did. But shortly after we started dating, Dixie told her twin "you should marry that guy!"

Dixie with Howard and your Editor at Gonzaga in 2003.

Meanwhile, Katie was set to graduate that May with very high marks, and her Uncle Bing had offered to pay her way through graduate school any place in the world. Instead, she opted to accept my marriage proposal, and as soon as I was able to return to Spokane, we were married on June 2, 1956 at St Augustine Parish. We headed off immediately to return to my assignment at White Sands Proving Ground, New Mexico. We spent our wedding night at the Marcus Whitman Hotel in Walla Walla, and when we arrived there, Katie's Dad had arranged for a bottle of champagne to be waiting for us!

Remember now that Bing was Katie's godfather, and in the early years of our life together, as a struggling young couple, every Christmas, without fanfare, a check for $300 would arrive from her Uncle Bing. That was a big, big help to us as we were starting out and living off-site in Las Cruces. Once my career took off and we were on more solid footing, the Christmas checks stopped, just the Christmas cards and presents kept coming. But when we first lived in Richland where I worked for GE after being discharged from active duty, Bing let us use his home at Hayden Lake for vacations for us and our friends who were in our bridge group. The place was beautifully located on the lake, along with an inboard Chris-craft and a little sail boat - what a dream for a group of engineers and scientists and their new families just getting started in their new careers. It was at one of these vacations that I first met Larry's wife Elaine. She told us stories about how difficult it was for Hollywood wives when martinis were the norm for luncheons that kept starting earlier and earlier.

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Back to you, Howard. In the fall of 1962 my Dad suffered a massive coronary. He survived, but his health would be much more precarious from then on. In 1963, his older brother Everett was admitted to the hospital in New York to have his legs amputated in a complication from diabetes. One night the phone rang, and it was Uncle Bing. He and Dad hadn't spoken to each other for 15 years. They talked for over an hour (imagine the long distance bill back then!) and when it was over, Dad said that Bing couldn't break free to visit Everett, and could Dad go? Of course he could, and that was the end of the rift between the two brothers.

During the 1960's, Uncle Bing made several visits to Spokane, usually involving some kind of event at Gonzaga. Dad would always go to these things, and sometimes Uncle Bing would come out to our house in the Valley. Once, when Dad wanted to show his brother his prize begonias on our patio, they walked through our kitchen and my mother's cleaning lady nearly fainted at the sight of Bing Crosby!

I was very much into both baseball and golf as a young teenager. The first time I played golf with Uncle Bing, I was 15 years old and we played the Burlingame

Country Club near his home. He noticed I didn't have a sand wedge in my bag, and said, 'I've got an old one in the garage I'll give you when we get back to the house." That day he gave me a 1936 Tommy Armour sand wedge, which is still in my bag today. That turned out to be the first of many rounds of golf with Uncle Bing, at Burlingame but also at San Francisco Golf Club, Olympic Club, Cypress Point, Pebble Beach, Lakeside CC and Bel-Air CC!

I was also playing high school and American legion baseball at the time. As a 15 year old, I envisioned a major league career for myself. Didn't realize the pros weren't looking for a real slow runner who couldn't field. But I could hit! Of course, I was a fan of the Pittsburgh Pirates, the team Uncle Bing owned a piece of. While we were visiting the Bay Area in the summer of '67, the Pirates were in town to play the Giants. Uncle Bing gave Dad and I tickets to the game, and told us to get to the park early. For the thrill of my lifetime to that point, I got to meet the Pirate players, including Bill Mazeroski, Roberto Clemente and Willie Stargell!

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OK, Bob, you're on! After Katie and I moved to Downers Grove, Illinois, near Chicago, I remember we attended a play that Bing's wife Kathryn was starring in, and she had two of her young children with her. Daughter Mary sat quietly on my lap, and I think Nathaniel fell asleep on Katie's lap!

Sometime around 1964 I was on a flight to Los Angeles and I passed out on the airplane and was taken by ambulance to the hospital in Inglewood.

As soon as Katie found out I was in the hospital, she decided to call her uncle Bing. Growing up she had always been told not to bother her uncle because so many took advantage of his generosity... but she was scared and had no one else to call. I'll never forget, shortly after I was admitted, the phone by my bed rang, and when I picked it up, the voice on the other end said, "Hi Bob, this is Bing." I was of course stunned, but that was so like him. He never had any entourage, made his own phone calls, and answered lots of letters personally. He not only made sure I had the best doctors, he also arranged for his driver, Leo Lynn, to pick me up when I was discharged from the hospital and take me to his home for a weekend to recover.

I also remember one time that Katie and I were in the Bay Area, and Bing invited us over to the house, where he and Kathryn hosted a lovely dinner for us in their formal dining room. After dinner, I remember Bing telling me, "Bob, that's not the norm. Lots of evenings I just have a bowl of cereal for dinner!" In all of our interactions with Bing, he could not have been more gracious. And, of course, Katie had lots of other great memories from her childhood. Bing was very good to both of the twins, also looking out for Dixie after she entered the Holy Names Order. Bing also never forgot Katie his goddaughter...she learned in a letter in March 1978 from O'Melveny & Myers, the attorneys handling Bing's estate that, "a specific bequest in your favor was provided in Bing Crosby's will...". We later learned that the attorneys thought the bequest was for Bob's daughter, Cathleen, explaining the long delay in Katie finding out after Bing's death in October 1977. Katie was the only niece or nephew (there were 16 others!) to receive such a bequest and probably explains why he was so kind to his goddaughter and her family all of these years.

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Howard Again. In the summer of 1973, with his health failing, my Dad wanted to travel to California to visit all of his siblings. We saw Uncle Bob in La Jolla, stayed with Uncle Larry in Beverly Hills, visited Mary Rose in Carmel, Auntie Kay in Watsonville, and finally spent a few days with Uncle Bing in Hillsborough. I saw Dad and Bing reminiscing for hours about their childhood, laughing and joking about all sorts of things!

In December of 1973, after a decade long battle with a failing heart, my Dad Ted Crosby passed away from congestive heart failure. He was the second of the seven siblings to go. (Everett had died 8 years earlier.) The funeral was a few days before Christmas, and Dad's sister Mary Rose and her daughter Carolyn travelled from California to the service. I was surprised not to hear from Uncle Bing. Then a few days later, I heard on the news that Uncle Bing had undergone major surgery to remove 2/3rds of his right lung. Cancer had been feared, but as it turns out it was a benign tumor caused by a very rare African fungus which he had contracted while on safari earlier that fall.

When my grandparents moved to California in the 1930's, Dad sold their house and shipped most of their belongings south. However, when I was going through my Dad's workshop after he died, I found a cardboard box stuffed full of old letters. Many of them were soldier's mail that Uncle Everett had sent home to his parents while fighting on the Western Front in World War One. However, there were also about 20 handwritten letters that Uncle Bing had sent home to his parents when he was travelling with the Whiteman Band in the '20's. They were absolutely fascinating, most were three or four pages long. I called Uncle Bing and told him what I'd found, and he said 'Boy I'd sure like to see those!" So, of course, I bundled them up and sent them to him. I wonder what became of them.

On Memorial Day weekend that next spring, I got word that my Auntie Kay Mullin, my godmother, had passed away from lung cancer. I was shocked, as I had only spoken to her three days before, and she never mentioned anything about being ill. The next day, Uncle Bing called me and I remember the call so well. He was

clearly very shaken by the news, and he said "Howard, she never told anyone she was ill. I would have gotten her to the Mayo Clinic, the best doctors, I would have done anything! But she never told me!" Ironically, I think Bing's sister Kay was the most like him, she didn't like to be fussed over, and in so many ways had a similar personality.

Howard and Bing enjoy a round of golf

By now I was just graduated from college, and of course, Uncle Bing knew I was a solid 1-handicapper, so for the next three years I received an invitation from him to play as an amateur participant in the Bing Crosby National Pro-Am at Pebble Beach. I have enough memories and stories of those three years to fill a whole volume of this magazine, including practice rounds with Bing and other celebrities, watching him perform at the Clambake, and lots more. Perhaps I'll save these stories for another issue.

I was living and working in the Seattle area in the fall of 1977, and on October 14th I opened my mailbox and saw my invitation to the 1978 Crosby, with a note from Uncle Bing. Then I saw the news of his death on the front page of the evening paper. I never went to that tournament. I knew it would never be the same.

Over the years, I have often reflected on how fortunate I was to have had such a wonderful Dad, whom I absolutely worshipped, as well as a whole stable of terrific aunts and uncles. It just so happened that one of my uncles was the most famous entertainer in the whole world. Probably mostly because of golf, I got to know Uncle Bing very well. I know I got to spend a lot more time with him than I ever would have happened if I hadn't shared his love of golf! I saw him treat taxi drivers, busboys, caddies, and waiters with friendly rapport and good humor, and never act like a "big shot." It's true that he didn't have any use for sycophants, and he absolutely hated it when people would carry on about how "great" he was. He had a genuine humility that was no doubt drilled into him by his Irish mother and the Jesuits at Gonzaga.

Bing Crosby had the admiration of the world as a great entertainer. He had my admiration as a great uncle. He just couldn't possibly have been any better to me. How lucky I was to know him.

Howard Crosby and Bob Ferguson

Celluloid Crosby

David Lobosco has special family memories of one of Bing's films.

This past December, my grandfather would have turned 90. As a tribute to him, I watched his favorite Bing Crosby movie 1936's *Pennies from Heaven*. I remember for the longest time this film was not available on video and DVD, and my grandfather was overjoyed when it was released. I personally think that this is the first Bing movie that showed the depth of Bing's acting. The title song was also a favorite record of both my grandfather and myself. Being raised in the Great Depression, to my grandfather the song and the movie represented hope and optimism for better times to come.

This was Crosby's first independent production jointly with Emanuel Cohen's Major Pictures and he had a share in the profits. The film was distributed by Columbia Pictures. The movie was Bing's most dramatic effort to date. In the film, Bing plays a sort of roving vagabond. The opening scene in the movie finds Bing incarcerated on a smuggling charge and he is visited by a fellow inmate going to the electric chair for a murder he had committed. For a man on death row, the warden and guards are pretty relaxed on how they are treating this murderer! Anyways, he hands Bing a letter to deliver, and being a man of his word, Bing promises to deliver it. The letter is for the family of the man that the convict murdered. The only family left is the murdered man's daughter (Edith Fellows) and her grandfather (Donald Meek). To make up for killing a man, the death row inmate gave the family the keys to his former hideout, which is now an abandoned house. Being that the daughter and grandfather are pretty much homeless they decide to move into the house. Bing wants to cut out as soon as he delivers the letter, but he soon gets involved in the lives of the daughter, the grandfather and the social worker (Madge Evans), who is trying to make sure the daughter is cared for.

APPIEST OF ALL HIS HAPPY HITS!
PENNIES from HEAVEN
Bing CROSBY
ADGE EVANS • EDITH FELLOWS
OUIS ARMSTRONG and His Famous Swing Band
Directed by NORMAN McLEOD
An EMANUEL COHEN Production
A COLUMBIA PICTURE

Of course, the star of the film is Bing; whose singing makes one forget that he basically plays a hobo! The great scene stealer in the film though was 13-year-old Edith Fellows. A noted child star of the 1930s, she later had a long second career on stage and television. Abandoned at age two months, she was raised by her grandmother, initially in Charlotte, North Carolina, and pushed into show business early. She appeared with many of the greats of the 1930s like Bing, W. C. Fields, and Tony Martin, but by the 1950s, stage fright had consumed her. She retired but returned to small roles in television and movies in the 1970s. However, seeing Edith in 1936's *Pennies from Heaven*, you would never imagine she would have problems in life. Bing worked with many child stars through the years, but the relationship and chemistry between Bing and Edith Fellows was by far the most believable.

Edith seeks Bing's protection in the "haunted" house.

The whole cast of *Pennies from Heaven* was strong. Bing fought for his idol Louis Armstrong to have a role in the movie, and for more than the normal stereotypical roles that African-Americans had to take in Hollywood in the 1930s. Although this was not the first time that a black performer was given prominent billing in a major Hollywood release (Paul Robeson had been billed fourth in that same year's *Show Boat*), special billing was given to Armstrong at the insistence of Bing. Rounding out the cast was the beautiful Madge Evans as the uptight social worker. It seems like that was the love story aspect of all Bing's early films: laidback crooner falls for uptight socialite. Donald Meek as the grandfather was perfectly cast. Meek never made a bad appearance in a movie, and he appeared in over 100 films!

The big draw of the film was the music. The entire score was written by the great team of Arthur Johnston and Johnny Burke, who wrote many of Bing's mid-1930s films. The title song "Pennies from Heaven" was nominated for an Oscar for best song, but it lost out to Jerome Kern's "The Way You Look Tonight" from the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers film *Swing Time*. The July 24, 1936 recording by Bing on Decca Records topped the charts of the day for ten weeks in 1936 and was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2004. The groaner also recorded the song in a performance with Louis Armstrong, Frances Langford and Jimmy Dorsey and his Orchestra on Decca which was issued as a 12" 78rpm recording. Crosby recorded the song again for his 1954 album *Bing: A Musical Autobiography*. The other songs fit well into the Bing mold of songs with the optimistic "One, Two, Button Your Shoe" and the romantic ballads: "So Do I" and "Let's Call a Heart a Heart". Next to the title song, my favorite number from the film was the Louis Armstrong solo "Skeleton in the Closet". Do yourself a favor and listen to Armstrong's Decca recording of the song. It is pure audio gold!

Looking back at the reviews from 1936, I am surprised they were not more positive. *Variety* wrote:

> *"Pennies from Heaven may qualify as a fair grosser because of Crosby's name, but basically it's a weak picture with a story that has little movement and only a scattered few mild giggles. It's spread pretty thin over 80 minutes, despite a good tuneful score which should be no handicap... Film won't advance*

Crosby although Crosby may overcome its faults to some extent. Best individual impression is by Louis Armstrong, Negro cornetist and hi-de-ho expert. Not as an eccentric musician, but as a Negro comedian he suggests possibilities. He toots his solo horn to a nice individual score, plus his band chores. Crosby has a couple of songs that will be reprised into fair popularity..."

Despite what the critics thought of the film, the movie holds a special place in my heart. A generation divided my grandfather and me, but when he played me Bing Crosby music that age gap disappeared, and my grandfather was one of the best friends I ever had. He instilled in me a love of Bing, and I can still remember where the scratches were on his Decca 78 of "Pennies from Heaven". Sitting and watching the film with him in the early 1990s was a simple memory but one of my favorite times. Watching 1936's *Pennies from Heaven* not only displays Bing Crosby's rise to the top of his performing ability, but it brings back fond memories of my grandfather. I consider a movie that does that 80 plus years after it was released to be a great movie indeed!

David Lobosco
davidlobosco@yahoo.com

(Editor: Reading David's article stimulated me to dig out Gary Giddins' first look at Bing's life "A Pocketful of Dreams". Gary devotes a number of pages to the film and makes some important points. On page 419, he says:

"Pennies from Heaven was neither the best nor the most successful picture Bing made, but it was surely the most emblematic of those that preceded the *Road* series and *Going My Way,* presenting him literally in the role with which many people already associated him, that of an American troubadour. The film's immense impact on his career was manifest in its recruitment of Johnny Burke and John Scott Trotter who became, respectively, his principal songwriter and musical director.

And, as it was Bing's project, he had the clout to repay an old debt. He wanted Louis Armstrong in the film. Cohen balked, seeing no reason to entail the expense of flying him in and having no desire to negotiate with Armstrong's crude, mob-linked but devoted manager, Joe Glaser. Bing refused to discuss the matter. The Reverend Satchelmouth was about to make his Hollywood debut."

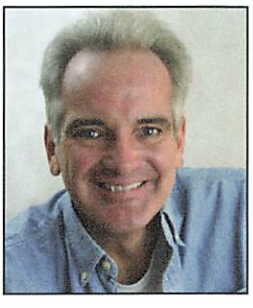
In summing up the movie, Gary opines:

"Pennies from Heaven, despite its fantastical script, is one of the few Depression era musicals to acknowledge the Depression, albeit without actually using the D-word. In the pre-Code years Busby Berkeley invoked hard times and suicidal bitterness in his Warners musicals, but by 1935 Fred and Ginger and Eleanor Powell and even Berkeley himself were setting their work in the rarefied chambers of penthouse ballrooms and battleships. *Pennies from Heaven,* probably the only Hollywood musical set in a part of New Jersey other than Atlantic City, presents a vision of contented socialism in which everyone is pleasant except people with jobs: the latter are carnival tricksters, social workers, municipal officials, and landlords…

…Bing is most effective in early scenes. He kept his weight down this time, and he looks seasoned and even slightly angular. While singing for coins, he encounters Patsy at a fair and performs "So Do I" in an effectively sentimental episode, the song reinforced by plush strings and woodwinds, his audience a montage of working-class neighbors, the treacle cut by close-ups of Bing. His line readings are sharp and his composure and canny physical movements contribute to the impression that he has the makings of a deeper actor than previously suspected. The *KMH* spirit is asserted in an improvised group-sing ("Old MacDonald") and in his dialogue with Armstrong and others. He mines laughs from lines that do not necessarily contain them."

Pennies from Heaven has always been one of my favourite Crosby films. I like all the songs with "So Do I" being the stand-out for me. It's Bing in the style which suited him best.)

A Little Bit of Irish



Jeremy Rose takes a look at George O'Reilly's 1967 show.

It is 8:00 am on the morning of September 22nd 1966.

Bing stands alone in a plain, dark grey raincoat and trilby watching the rush-hour traffic trundle along O'Connell Street in Dublin, Ireland. A film-crew has set up a boom camera and Bing is waiting for the camera to pan across the end of O'Connell Bridge and down O'Connell Street before he turns to camera to sing the opening refrain of "Molly Malone" and deliver his spoken introduction to "A Little Bit of Irish", his 1967 colour TV special filmed and recorded entirely on location in and around Dublin.

Although that brief O'Connell Street segment formed the opening scene of the show, further location and recording work had taken place the previous day and would indeed continue into the later morning and afternoon of the 22nd. The background to the gestation and production of "A Little Bit of Irish" provides, I

think, a fascinating glimpse into not only the techniques of television production at the time, but also Bing's "work/life" balance at this stage of his career, some 40 years after his first forays into show-business.

"A Little Bit of Irish" only came about after protracted personal discussions spanning several years between Bing and the Irish entrepreneur George O'Reilly.

George had first met Bing when he visited him at London's Savoy Hotel in June 1953. Over the years, a close personal friendship developed, with Bing eventually granting George the accolade of, "My favourite Irishman"! Negotiations were finally concluded in early 1966, and a week in September of that year was scheduled for the taping, in Ireland, of an hour-long show featuring Bing, Kathryn and a roster of home-grown guest artists.

(A few years ago I had the very great pleasure of spending some time with George and a few other ICC members over dinner at the Leeds meeting, and I can only say that having experienced his wonderful gift of the gab at first hand, I'm amazed that it took him so long to get Bing to agree to do the show!)

The taping in Ireland took place towards the end of a month-long visit to the UK by Bing and Kathryn which began when they landed at Prestwick Airport in Scotland on August 28th, having flown in from San Francisco. Apart from a couple of days filming for "The American Sportsman" programme - salmon-fishing the River Derwent in Cumbria - and a few TV interviews, "A Little Bit of Irish" was the only work undertaken by Bing during this visit. The rest of the time seems to have been taken up with playing golf, going to the races in Doncaster, West Yorkshire and being entertained by various members of the British aristocracy!

(Incidentally, it was during their stay in Cumbria, at The Trout Hotel in Cockermouth, that Bing and Kathryn were visited by various members of the International Crosby Circle, including our very own Mr Michael Crampton!)

George O'Reilly welcomes the Crosbys to Ireland.

Four locations were chosen for the filming. O'Connell Bridge overlooking O'Connell Street for the opening sequence; the grounds and interior of Howth Castle, the ancestral home of the St Lawrence family, some 12 miles from Dublin; the stage of the world-famous Abbey Theatre in Dublin, and the interior of the Guinness Brewery in James's Street, Dublin. Kathryn was to join Bing for the Howth Castle and Abbey Theatre sequences.

Bing and Kathryn arrived in Dublin on Friday, September 16th, by which time rehearsals and pre-recording sessions for the separate guest artists' slots would almost certainly have been well under way. On September 20th, five orchestral tracks were laid down in O'Connell Hall, Dublin, together with the contributions of The Guinness Choir, who would feature with Bing in the final segment of the show. The orchestra was The Radio Éireann Light Orchestra, conducted by Buddy Bregman.

Bregman, of course, had been the producer, arranger and conductor on Bing's 1956 album, "Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings", but by the 1960s his career had brought him across the Atlantic, and after producing several TV specials in Europe, he was working as a TV producer in the UK. In 1966 he was appointed Head of Light Entertainment for the UK TV company, Rediffusion London.

Bing added his vocals to the pre-recorded orchestral tracks during separate sessions at the Eamonn Andrews Studios in Dublin and the guest artists would have done the same. The completed tracks would then have been played back during filming on location for the artists to mime to. Film and soundtrack would then be spliced together post-production. Spoken sections would have been recorded "live" on location.

As we've seen, "A Little Bit of Irish" was filmed out of sequence, but I'll give a run-down of the programme as it was originally broadcast in the USA on the 14th March 1967, just three days before St Patrick's Day.

As the opening credits appear, the camera pans across the end of O'Connell Bridge and down O'Connell Street, where Bing comes into shot. He turns to camera and sings the first 16 bars of "Molly Malone".

"In Dublin's fair city..."

He then delivers the spoken introduction to "A Little Bit of Irish". (Incidentally, although they receive no screen credit, the spoken linking passages were apparently penned by Bing and Kathryn themselves.) We cut to an exterior shot in the grounds of Howth Castle, where we find Bing singing a chorus of "Come Back to Erin" while strolling across the croquet lawn past two little girls playing on a garden swing. He pauses and turns to introduce the first three guest artists, who perform in the castle grounds.

Popular Irish folk band The Ludlows sing "The Bold Fenian Men", a song which nails its republican credentials firmly to the mast. They are followed by the

internationally-renowned Irish soprano Bernadette Greevy, who sings a setting of Moira O'Neill's poem "The Song of Glen Dun" by the Edinburgh-born, naturalised American composer Helen Hopekirk. The sequence ends with a charming display of Irish folk dancing by the young members of The Rory O'Connor Dancers.

Next, we find Bing and Kathryn in the billiard room of Howth Castle, and as Bing - puffing on his pipe - knocks a few balls up the table, they exchange a bit of banter about the differences between their current location and Kathryn's home state of Texas.

Kathryn then recounts one of the ancient legends associated with the castle. She ends by saying, "Oh, if these walls could talk, what a chilling tale they could tell", which leads neatly to a wonderfully over-the-top, eye-rolling recitation by the actor Milo O'Shea of the traditional Irish "nursery rhyme", "Ignatius John", the tragic-comic tale of a wounded Irish soldier's thoughts of home, filmed in the ruins of the castle battlements.

Bing and Kathryn are now discovered in a window-seat of a panelled gallery inside the castle. When Kathryn extols the beauty of the view out across Dublin Bay, Bing explains that, lovely though it is, his favourite Irish bay lies way over on the west coast, and the Howth Castle section ends with Bing strolling through the gallery singing "Galway Bay".

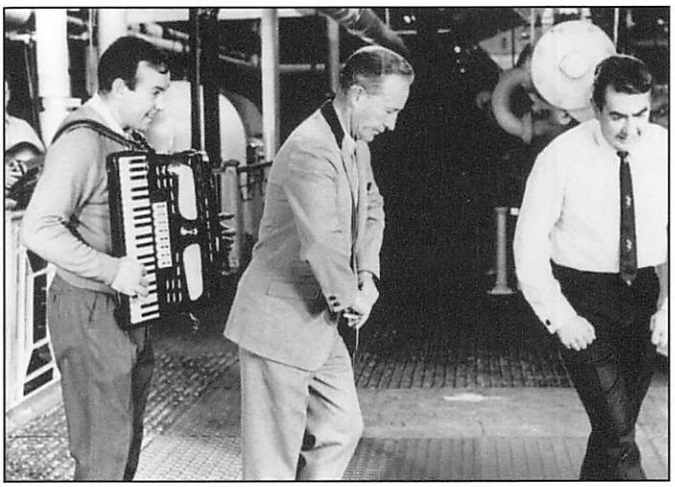
At the time of the filming of "A Little Bit of Irish", Dublin's Abbey Theatre was presenting a production of Sean O'Casey's play, "The Plough and the Stars", and we now see Bing standing on its famous stage with the set for that production still in place. He walks towards the footlights singing a few bars of "Molly Malone". Seating himself on a low footstool at the front of the stage, he proceeds to pay tribute to Irish actor Barry Fitzgerald, who had appeared at The Abbey between 1914 and 1936 before making the move to Hollywood where, of course, he appeared with Bing in several movies, the most famous of which being, "Going My Way", for which Bing and Fitzgerald shared the male acting awards at the 1945 Oscars.

Bing dedicates the next number, "The Isle of Innisfree" to his former colleague and is joined by the girls of The Young Dublin Singers. Having conducted the choir in the final bars of this number, Bing introduces the Irish baritone John McNally, who sings, "I'm Off to Philadelphia in the Morning". Kathryn then takes over emcee duties and explains that this last song had been the marching song of the Irish volunteers during the American Civil War, before introducing Alma Carroll who, together with The Young Dublin Singers, sings a beautiful Gaelic lament, "Fil, fil a Rún Ó ".

Kathryn then introduces the actress Siobhan McKenna, who recites two poems by the Irish revolutionary poet Padraic Pearse, "The Fool" and "The Mother". Although primarily known for her stage appearances at The Abbey, and her film and television work, Ms McKenna also found success on Broadway, where she twice earned Tony Award Best Actress nominations.

This recitation ends The Abbey Theatre section of the programme and we now find ourselves inside the Guinness Brewery on James's Street in Dublin, where the members of the in-house Guinness Choir are found ranged along the staircases and gantries among the huge vats on the brewery floor. They sing "Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms", after which Bing comes into shot and introduces their next number, "The Wexford Boys", which he informs us was a favourite of the late John F. Kennedy. Following this, Bing introduces, "Ireland's favourite show-band", Dermot O'Brien and his Clubmen, who perform three numbers, "The Devil's Own", "Come to the Bower" and "The Merry Ploughboy", the latter's jaunty title belying its staunchly republican sentiments. "I'm off to join the IRA and I'm off tomorrow morn..."

Milo O'Shea then sings a very catchy vaudeville-style number called, "A Christian Irish Boy" (about which I'm afraid I haven't been able to find any details) before joining Bing and Dermot O'Brien for a spirited rendition of Bing's 1946 top-ten hit, "MacNamara's Band".



Rehearsing the spirited rendition of "MacNamara's Band".

We cut to Bing as he starts to sing, "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" while strolling past the members of The Guinness Choir. He pauses to sing the second half of the chorus, and one of my favourite moments in the whole show is seeing the delighted grin on the face of one of the ladies of The Guinness Choir as she gazes at Bing! The choir joins in for the second chorus as the closing credits roll and Bing walks slowly out of shot, pausing only to indicate to one of the male members of the choir that it might be a good idea to sample some of the ebony nectar that is Guinness!

As I've watched "A Little Bit of Irish" over and over again for the purposes of this article, I've become increasingly impressed by what the production team achieved given the tight schedule. I'm pretty sure that anything not involving Bing directly would have been shot at the relevant locations either before or after 20th and 21st September, when Bing and Kathryn were filming. Camera positions would have been chosen and tracking shots thoroughly rehearsed with stand-ins well in advance of Bing and Kathryn's arrival. They would have then been placed and rehearsed before the final takes. I know that there was much more "live" television in the 1960s, and technicians were well-schooled in the disciplines involved in getting it right first time. Nevertheless, to accomplish a two-day shoot with Mr and Mrs Crosby over four different locations is still pretty impressive!

The guest spots by The Ludlows, Milo O'Shea and The Rory O'Connor Dancers at Howth Castle are relatively straightforward single camera set-ups. (The Ludlows start their number out-of-shot, presumably so they can co-ordinate their guitar strumming with the location play-back of the pre-recorded track before they are seen!)

Bing's opening number in the grounds of the castle is a two-camera set-up, but looks very much like it was achieved in a single take. Bernadette Greevy's number is, again, a two-camera set-up but I suspect it's made up of more than one take and a bit of post-production editing. (It's obviously a chilly morning when she starts singing, but it seems to have warmed up quite a bit by the end of the song!)

The scene in the billiard room is a simple static shot, but the "Galway Bay" sequence uses two cameras, the second one picking up Bing as he walks through the gallery.

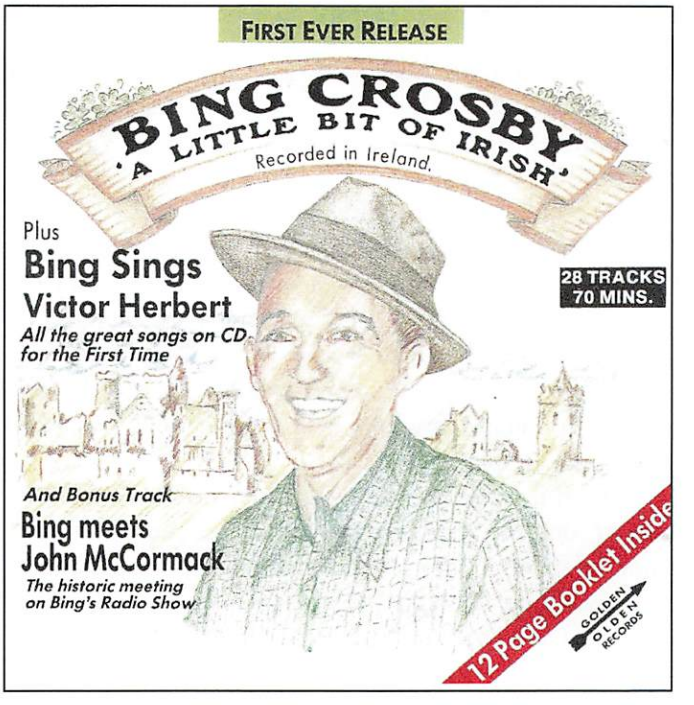
The Abbey Theatre section uses multiple cameras positioned at various points throughout the theatre, including an overhead shot of Bing with The Young Dublin Singers. The more I watch this sequence, the more convinced I am that it was filmed in a single take, from the moment we first see Bing on stage right up until the end of the Gaelic lament, just before Kathryn's introduction of Siobhan McKenna. There are a couple of tell-tale moments. Bing only just gets to the end of his spoken introduction before he has to pick up his musical cue at the start of "The Isle of Innisfree", and Kathryn looks momentarily taken by surprise as she picks up narration after John McNally's number. If separate shots were being taken, it would have been relatively easy to "go again" on those two snippets.

With the Guinness Brewery sequence it's slightly more difficult to tell. It's possible that it was all achieved in one take, but the first sequence of numbers with the Dermot O'Brien Showband doesn't feature Bing, so it's possible that this was a separate take.

Whatever the technical details of the production, one thing is clear. Bing is, as ever, in total control of, and at ease with, his material. He must have been a director's dream!

Although the show was shown in the UK as well as the USA, I think the choice of repertoire and various references to State-side connections during the narration, show that it was aimed primarily at an American audience. Indeed, in its review of the show in its March 22nd, 1967 issue, *Variety* magazine stated, "...Crosby wandered through the Guinness factory and other venues, like a kindly guide and dodged most of the pitfalls of sentimentality inherent in the subject. With the US bulging with Irishmen, and with the Kennedy connection still to the fore, the show should foster nostalgia and mild pleasure in that particular mart".

Availability of "A Little Bit of Irish" since the original broadcast has been rather sporadic. There was a VHS tape release, but this was a rather poor transfer. The internet age enables us to see it in its entirety on YouTube - and in fairly good quality. The recent TIme Life TV Specials release includes the complete show in very good quality, but in my opinion this is just pipped to the post by a 2006 "official" DVD release on the Varé se Sarabande label, which in my opinion has slightly sharper definition and depth of colour.



In 1993 George O'Reilly produced and released an audio soundtrack album of the show on CD, featuring all of Bing's contributions, together with a selection of Bing's commercial recordings of songs by the Irish-American composer Victor Herbert, plus with a further selection of Irish-themed numbers from Bing's various radio shows. This disc also includes the guest appearance by world-famous Irish tenor John McCormack on Bing's KMH show of 13th May 1937.

One of the many joys involved in producing these articles is the chance to spend some time immersing myself in a particular aspect of Bing's career which might not have featured too heavily in my viewing or listening habits in recent years, and in doing so hopefully learn just a little bit more about the man whose life and work we all hold so dear. This has certainly been the case in this instance, and I will be returning to "A Little Bit of Irish" with renewed pleasure in the future.

Even more so than usual, my thanks are due to Malcolm for making the immense amount of work that went into the, "Bing Crosby: Day by Day" project available to all via the magazine web-site. Without this invaluable resource, this article would almost certainly never have been written.

Jeremy Rose

(Editor: Those in the Reading / Sonning area in Berkshire, UK might like to know that Jeremy is in "Guys and Dolls" being presented at The Mill at Sonning Theatre from November 23, 2018 to February 23, 2019. He will be singing "More I Cannot Wish You" which Bing recorded in 1951.
(http://www.millatsonning.com/shows/guys-and-dolls)

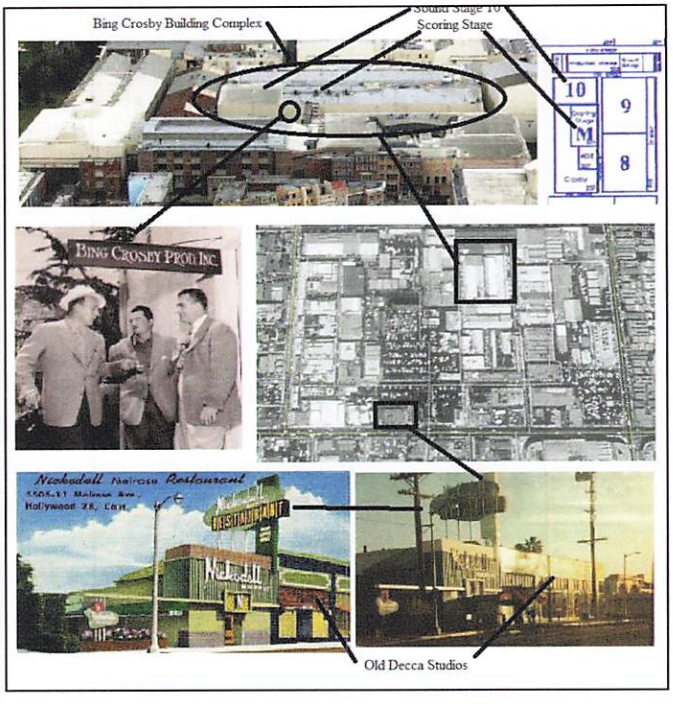
Bing's Buildings
Paramount and Decca

Bob Phillips has been researching Bing's various offices in Los Angeles.

In 1932 Bing Crosby became involved with Paramount Pictures located on Melrose Ave in southeast Hollywood. By 1934 he was in several pictures and had joined Jack Kapp in the newly formed Decca Record Company that was located adjacent to the Paramount Lot. This area of Paramount shown below in the overhead photograph was to be associated with Bing for more than 30 years.

His film work was being done at Sound Stage 10, one of one of the first sound stages built on the Paramount lot. This sound stage was part of a large building shown above in the oval that became known as the Bing Crosby Building complex. Besides Stage 10, the building also had the Scoring Stage and associated offices and workshops. The Scoring Stage was where "White Christmas" was recorded.

In July 1934, Bing incorporated and established his first office in this Paramount complex. It was located on the upper floor of the Crosby Building complex near Sound Stage 10 (shown by the circle). This facility included other offices and his dressing room. In 1937 he moved his main office to the new Crosby Building at 9028 Sunset Boulevard in the Strip, but he still kept his office at Paramount. In 1944 it became known as Bing Crosby Productions, Inc.



In 1934 Bing Crosby began his association with Jack Kapp and Decca Records. The new Decca Los Angeles recording facility was a nondescript 100 by 100 foot building at 5505 Melrose Ave next to the Paramount studios. It is the bottom outline in the overhead photograph and was next to the Nickodell Restaurant at 5511 Melrose. Decca was within walking distance of his Paramount office, and it may have been part of the deal to get Bing to work for Kapp and Decca. Sometime after Decca left in 1966, the restaurant took over the Decca building, and their address became 5505 - 5511 Melrose. Decca also had New York studios at 50 West 57th Street where Bing recorded. Capitol Records located their recording studio on the left side of the Nickodell Restaurant at 5515 Melrose in late 1948.

By the mid-1990s these properties were taken over by Paramount. The Decca/Nickodell building was torn down about 2000 and became a Paramount parking lot. The Capitol building was retained and is now the Paramount's visitor center. All of the Bing Crosby Building complex and two buildings next to it in the Paramount lot were demolished in late 2008 to make room for the Post Production Village that opened 2010.

It is interesting to note that two of main locations where Bing worked were next to each other. The third was about a mile north on Sunset Boulevard in the CBS

Columbia Square where he did the radio shows. As noted above in 1936 he had outgrown the Paramount office and bought a building in what is now West Hollywood to be his main headquarters. It was an area where many of the other entertainers had their offices, and the Crosby Building served as his headquarters until the late-1960s. He also kept the office at Paramount (Bing Crosby Productions, Inc.) and the CBS facility until the early-1960s.

Bob Phillips

Never Forget to Remember

Martin McQuade has been to see the off-Broadway production of *Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin* and as you would expect Bing crops up frequently.

We learn from the stage production *Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin* that the ultimate American composer and lyricist became a recluse toward the end of his illustrious life. This realization underscores the fact that, although Berlin's beloved songs are omnipresent and Berlin himself was his own best song plugger, we have only glimpsed his personal life through a glass darkly. Nobody has ever notably portrayed him. Not until now, that is, as Felder, with the blessings of the Berlin estate, traces the amazing trajectory of our nation's troubadour in his mesmerizing one-man show, replete with illuminating back screen projections. Felder, a piano virtuoso whose primary focus is classical music, has occasionally incarnated pop icons ranging from George Gershwin to Louis Prima. Presently he is Berlin personified, in all his bespectacled warmth and gnomic irascibility. At the outset, Berlin, by way of Felder's precise channeling, welcomes a privileged audience into his living room on Beekman Place in New York. The time is Christmas Eve, 1988. Berlin is 100. Ellin, his wife of 60 years, has just died, and he has less than a year to live.

Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin

A grand piano and Christmas tree dominate the set, similar to that used by Bing Crosby as he rendered his elegiac performance of "White Christmas" at the finale of his last TV special. Berlin is dreading the onslaught of the carolers who would annually descend upon his home, eager to serenade him. The curmudgeon in him resents their presumptuous ownership of his seasonal song of songs. He has no reluctance, however, to share its significance with those "friends" invited to attend Theater 59 East 59, a short walk from Berlin's long ago hermitage. Felder elaborated, by telephone, upon the intertwining of tune and tunesmith with this reporter.

"Berlin's daughters told me they remembered that every Christmas morning after opening presents and as Christmas breakfast approached, their parents would just disappear and for the longest time they wouldn't know where they had gone. Apparently, every single Christmas their parents would visit the tomb of the 3-week-old infant boy they lost in 1928 to crib death [SIDS] *on Christmas Day. I was amazed to find this out. It is very touching and moving. I can only pretend to fathom how devastating it must be to be a parent who loses a child in a crib death - I can only imagine how guilty they felt for the rest of their lives, with the sense of "What could I have done to prevent that?" It's so simple. Obviously, there was nothing they could have done. Something happened beyond their control. It was ordained, an accident that just came on. Imagine their sadness. I can understand why "White Christmas" held a very special place in Berlin's heart. It was really something very, very deep for him.*

The ways the words move with the melody suggest longing. Harmonically, the song shifts and underscores with a little bit of minor. Any composer would have done that. It's not that it's so special about what he did. However, it's a combination of all the things together that line up to make actually what is a perfect song, so well made and perfectly constructed. He was particularly partial to it, along with "God Bless America," which his daughters told me was perhaps his favorite song, since it was so meaningful to his national pride."

Speaking of his abiding patriotism, Berlin reflects at one point in the show how he does not recognize the country, circa 1988, causing one to wonder how he would react to these ultra-iconoclastic times. Elder includes the verse during his rendition of "White Christmas." He shared his views about the seldom-heard preface. *"I agree with Berlin being in accord with Bing's decision not to sing the verse of "White Christmas" in the original recording. It was a very good choice. Of course, the verse's sentiment with the singer sitting in Beverly Hills being kind of snide about the seasons never changing would have been entirely wrong in the movie, especially in the sequence it appears in. The verse is interesting in terms of what Berlin is thinking. "Longing to be up north" was never longing to be in the*

snow, but longing to be somewhere in heaven so he would be able to be with his child. It's always how I felt about it."

Felder responded to my recollection of Bing singing the verse at The Uris Theater here in New York toward the end of his life, which completely surprised the audience as he lapsed into the chorus. "*The stars in those days were real performers. Unlike today, they really knew their stuff. They knew how to address the audience. Not that today people don't. Of course they do. But we're sort of photocopies of the real thing. Those stars of yesteryear knew how to be entertainers. They knew what the audience needed, and they weren't afraid of giving it to them. They were also very clever and shrewd about all the choices that they made, musically and artistically. The proof of the pudding is that years later their accomplishments are still benchmarks of great American artistry."*

Akin to Bing in his final concerts, Felder encourages the audience to sing along during the more irresistible Berlin chestnuts. "*The intention of the sing-a-long wasn't jaded or a hearkening back to something silly. I thought it was a very touching way to include the audience. It says so much about what has happened with Berlin and his music, and similarly Bing Crosby and his music. It is part of the audience's culture, part of who they are, their thinking and their being. It's a way to bring people together in this crazy world we're living in. There's a wonderful sense of community when that takes place in the show."*

The 1968 Ed Sullivan show.

How, in Felder's view, did Berlin regard Bing? "*Berlin was fascinated with Bing's capacity to sing to the regular person in the way that Berlin felt he was writing for the regular person. By "the regular person" I mean the true American, the person who was, as Berlin said, the core of this county. I think he saw in Bing Crosby a simpatico soul. I could only imagine it must have been a thrill for Berlin to have Bing's voice sing "White Christmas" so beautifully, with such color and musicianship and with everything that Bing Crosby stood for musically. I can't imagine anything less than that. Not to mention that Bing's recording is the highest grossing piece in the history of music. Naturally, it took both the composer and the singer to make that happen."* Counterpointing the sublime with the ridiculous within the show, Berlin derides what he perceives as Presley's diphthong laden desecration of his yuletide evergreen.

During our conversation, Felder recalled "the wonderful" *Ed Sullivan Show*, which celebrated Berlin's 80th birthday in 1968. During that broadcast, Bing remarked on Berlin's limited vocal capacity. *You got to hug him to hear him*. On the contrary, Felder's resonance embraces us, showcasing a cavalcade of Berlin's major songs, many of which have specific biographic overtones, i.e. "When I Lost You," "Always," "What'll I Do" and "Count Your Blessings."

""Count Your Blessings" is the last offering, so to speak, of the show, even though it was written quite a bit before the end of his life, in his late fifties. Berlin couldn't sleep and he was always haunted by his moods. Consequently, his doctor told him "why don't you count your blessings." So he came up with this very tempting idea. It really represents what Berlin did. He took things that happened on a regular basis and he was able to turn them into very meaningful songs, and songs that would mean so much to so many people. I thought that it would be a good way to tap into his emotional state toward the end of his reclusive life."

Felder imbues Berlin's concise words with a contagious emotion. "*There is poetry in his lyrics, so simple yet so profound. He understood how to do that. That's what is so brilliant about it. For instance, "What'll I do with just a photograph to tell my troubles to?" It is so beautiful and simple, and paints such an amazing picture. You see the whole thing right before your eyes. It's crystal clear what the whole thing is. I find the lyrics he composed are such genius. You want to talk about genius, Berlin was a genius, and so was Bing Crosby. You couldn't teach this to these guys. They figured it out. They knew how to do it. They were so individual in the way they did things. That's what genius is, a discovery of finding a unique way to say something, so very old yet so completely new. By old I mean something that's been there from the beginning of time. When you hear Crosby sing Berlin, or in fact anything, or when you hear Berlin's compositions, they don't feel like they've been composed or sung. They feel like they*

have always been there. They are present. And somehow there is such genius to that. Who knows where it comes from, or why? Of course, the craftsmanship to make that happen is so huge. But it's magic. I believe in that kind of magic. I really do."

Felder ended our chat with on a melancholy note. "*His family told me Berlin went seriously downhill emotionally towards the end. By 1970, Berlin gave up the ghost and wanted to go home. He had enough. He thought the music world had left him way behind."* Nevertheless, the show ends with bittersweet optimism as the centenarian professes his credo. *"I wrote the songs for you and for love."* Felder confided to me what this experience has been. "*Although Berlin was sort of a sidetrack, he was nevertheless a very magical and wonderful journey to take.*" Mr. Felder's journey is ours as well, during which his alchemy guides us to an enhanced appreciation for an artist physically gone now for nearly 30 years but whose spiritual words and melodies will forever linger on. The show ended its two-month run on Oct. 28.

Autumn in Gramercy Park

Vernon Duke's "Autumn in New York" was in the air Oct. 15 as The National Arts Club in Gramercy Park hosted a 120th anniversary concert. It was my pleasure in 2004 to arrange for Kathryn Crosby to perform her one-woman show within these hallowed halls. Cabaret doyenne KT Sullivan was MC for the program, *1918: It Was a Very Good Year*," which paid tribute to luminaries born in 1918. Shana Farr and Jeff Harnar magnificently honored Leonard Bernstein and Alan Jay Lerner. Bobby Troup got his due with Joie Bianco's swinging interpretation of the Crosby/Andrews Sisters hit "Route 66." Natalie Douglas honored Pearl Bailey with a sensuous performance of "Legalize My Name." She also bore witness to Bailey's close friendship with Bing's longtime composer, Jay Livingston. Showman Mark Nadler paid homage to Jolson's 1918 show *Sinbad* with "Rock-A-Bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody." In his intro, he cited Bing's obscure 1965 recording. The evening's music director Jon Weber played a medley of songs composed by his mentor Marion McPartland. Weber, in fact, succeeded McPartland as radio host of *Piano Jazz*. KT led a sing-along finale of "After You've Gone" and "Smiles." After the affair, Weber displayed for me his love of early Crosby, singing "Down the Old Ox Road." He then joined me on a duet of "Learn to Croon," a lesson all have mastered remarkably well.

Martin McQuade

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue

David Currington, by email from Turramurra, New South Wales, Australia.

The 1937 film *It Happened in Hollywood* includes a scene where a number of stand-ins for known stars appear. They were used by the studios for fittings, lighting and other mundane necessities in film production. In reading about this, the point is made that they were not doubles, but stand-ins. An interesting Bing-related fact I thought.

Earl Haddon standing-in for Bing.

Bob Grace, by email from Houston, Texas, USA

Bing's name remains before the public in many ways — including sports. Del Mar, the race track that Bing founded, is calling its fall racing calendar (Nov. 9 - Dec. 2) the "Del Mar Bing Crosby Season." The opening day stakes race is the Kathryn Crosby Stakes. The Bob Hope Stakes (a grade 3 stakes race) will be run on Nov. 17. (In case you're wondering, the Bing Crosby Stakes was run July 28.)

Del Mar remains one of the most successful racetracks in the country, and it announced this past week that it will again host the Breeders Cup on Nov. 5 - 6, 2021.

By the way, since its beginning, when Bing, Pat O'Brien, Gary Cooper and Joe E. Brown pooled their resources to get the track up and running, Del Mar continues to receive support from the Hollywood community. Today the board of directors includes actress/horse lover Bo Derek, who is using her celebrity to promote animal and wounded veteran causes.

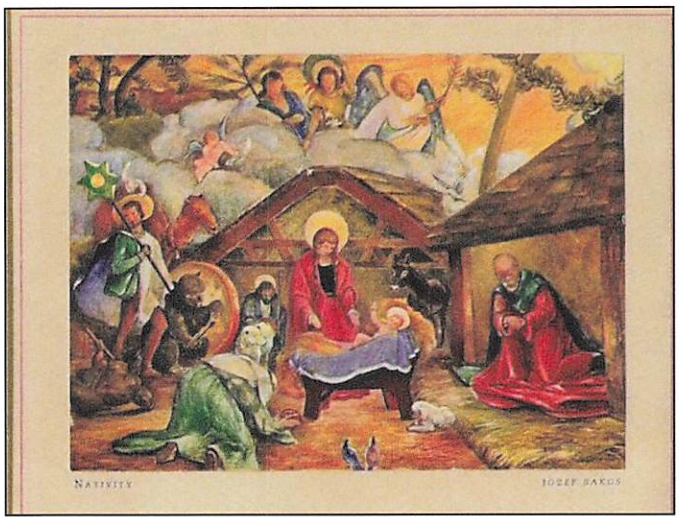
I see that *White Christmas* will be shown in movie theaters nationwide here in the colonies this Christmas season on Dec. 9 & 12 as part of the Turner Classic

Movies Big Screen Classics series.

Also, in case you didn't hear, Samsung and LG have announced 8K televisions will be on the market by October. This, of course, means that 8K videos will soon follow - and some of us eventually will be upgrading our video collections all over again.

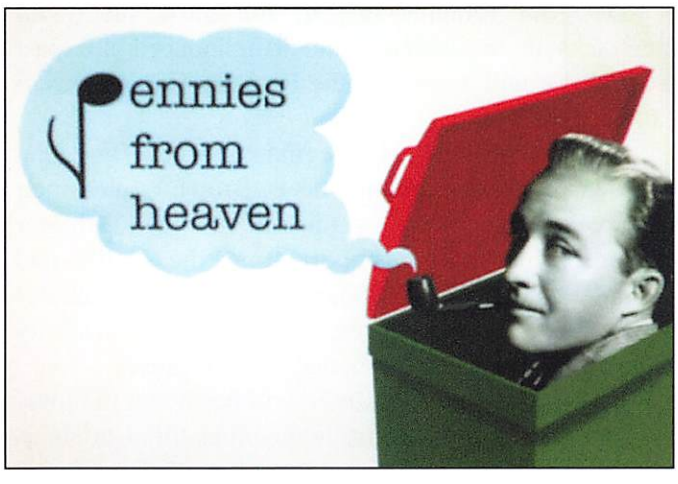
Maureen Solomon, by email from Los Angeles, USA

Here is Bing and Dixie's Christmas card from the early 1940s. Not dated. I thought you would like to see it....and maybe include in the Christmas issue.



Graham Pascoe, by email from Bathurst, New South Wales, Australia.

A rare and unusual reference to Bing appeared in the weekend edition (11 & 12 August) of The Sydney Morning Herald's Good Weekend supplement. A regular, light-hearted column titled 'Modern Guru' by Danny Katz includes an illustration by Simon Letch and this week's subject is a letter from a reader (supposedly) concerning a 50-cent coin accidentally thrown into a large rubbish bin, known in Australia as a wheelie bin. The illustration shows a green bin out of which appears Bing's head smoking a pipe from one can see which a cloud of smoke titled 'Pennies from heaven'. The caption for the picture is 'Bin Crosby'.



Each week I listen to Howard Leader's program and congratulations for providing him with the recording of 'Both Sides Now', a good song which Bing sang well. From time to time I hear Arne Fogel's BING SHIFT and I've just heard his last session in which he played a couple of non-Bing recordings: 'Kathryn Crosby singing 'It'll be a hot time...' with Bob Merrill on an album dedicated to Joe Bushkin, one which you undoubtedly know well but it was new to me. When I think of Joe Bushkin I remember a session at Hofstra where he was such an entertaining story teller I could have listened to him all day.

Arne also played a record which leads me to a personal anecdote. In 1978 a friend and I presented a series of 30-minute broadcasts on Bing for our local community radio station. I thought of using Bing's theme song to introduce each program but as I was looking at a pile of 78s at a local 'junk' shop I found the record I'm referring to. It was Dean Martin's 'If I could sing like Bing'. It was the 'B' side of the disc and therefore was in excellent condition. I don't recall what was on the 'A' side but it was badly worn.

(Editor: Scott Payne, who distributes BING magazine in Canada, received a nice email from one of his members in October.)

Barry Birch, by email from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Just thought I would drop you a line to give loads of credit to everyone involved with the magazine. Once again it was filled with interesting articles. I particularly enjoyed the research article, in the spring edition, trying to find out more about Trudy Erwin. When I was working at the Nostalgia station here in Winnipeg, I tried to build a database with info on as many singers and musicians as I could find in my books and on the Internet. But there were some entertainers that seemed to be lost in time. So it was interesting for me to read the research. The articles keep letting me know, how little I personally know about Bing, and how interesting it is to find new info. And Richard Baker does a lot of work to keep on top of any new Bing issues

I'm always surveying Malcolm Macfarlane's column on TV and radio highlights. I wanted to mention that I have found an online radio station out of the UK that bills itself as "the best in easy listening". I would definitely vouch for its accuracy. It further states on its home page "Everyone can enjoy the classic songs performed by the greatest singers. Serenade Radio features easy listening from Frank Sinatra to the Carpenters, from Bing Crosby to Bread, Ella Fitzgerald to Harry Connick Jr."

I have finally found a radio station that I can turn to when I get up, and leave it on until I go to bed. And, of course, Bing is played frequently. All the shows are hosted, usually in 3 hour divisions, with the same

announcers on weekdays. The shows on the weekend are hosted by different announcers and take on different themes. Right now (4-6 CDT) there is a show of light classical music (very enjoyable). Earlier today there was a nostalgia show of music from the 20s, 30s, and 40s. There was a song by Bing earlier today, and I heard 3 tunes on Thursday. I wasn't home on Friday. My son found a computer app that allows me to route the station from my computer to my stereo equipment in the living room. My wife loves the music.

I occasionally break away to listen to special shows, like the Bing Shift podcasts (although the last 2 weeks they have been screwed up). I also listen to a Chicago station on Saturday afternoon that offers a 4 hour hosted show featuring all old time radio. There are old radio shows, interviews with people from that era, and later. They have been highlighting items that were broadcast 75 years ago (presidential speeches, etc). In the last couple of weeks there were two Bing Crosby shows, relating to the War Bond Drives. This station is WBCD 90.9 FM

I decided to write you about the easy listening station, because I thought you might be interested. The web site is "serenade-radio.com". Keep up the good work.

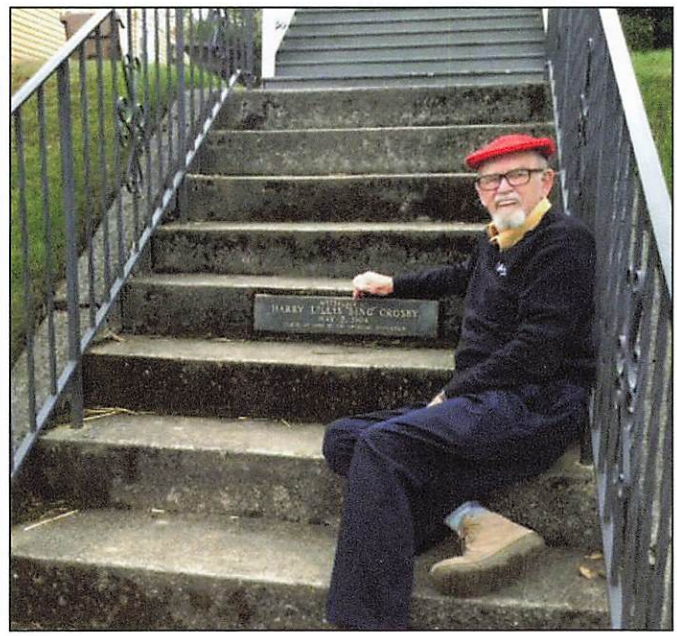
(Editor: Many thanks, Barry. It is indeed an excellent station and our own John Walton presents the Crooners Club programme every Friday when he always features Bing.)

Ron Field, by email from Morton, Washington, USA

Went to Tacoma recently to view the Michelangelo exhibition then popped down to see the house that Bing was born in. It looks in pretty good nick considering it is over 100 years old. The plaque is still showing the incorrect data that Bing was born on May 2, 1904.

Bing's birthplace.

St. Patrick's RC Church over the road was built in 1906 after the family left for Spokane. The original church was destroyed by fire.



Ron alongside the plaque.

Lorne Harasen, by email from Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

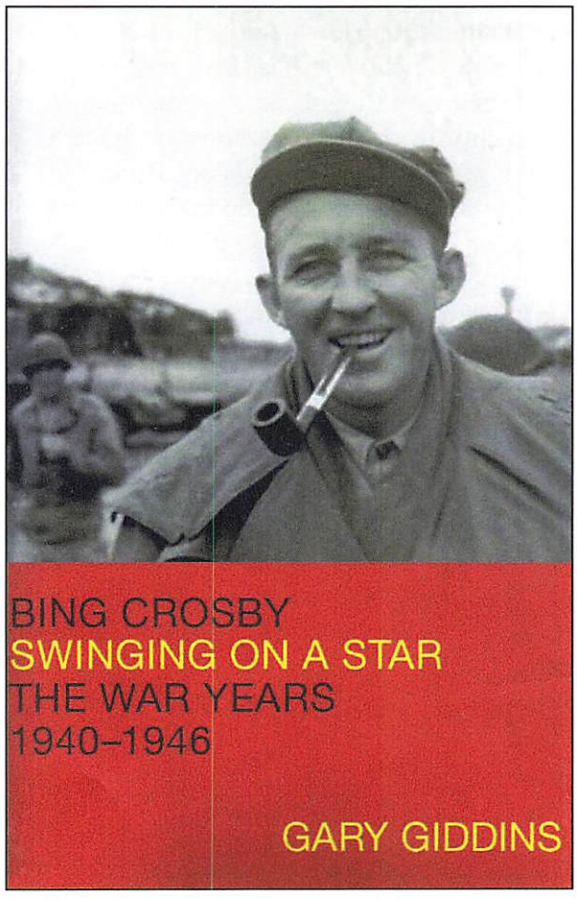
While writing my series of articles for BING magazine which were based on some interviews I conducted with Bing, I came across some very kind comments by him about how much he enjoyed working with comedienne Carol Burnett. He said she was a great talent and fun to work with and that she was "without any fits of frustration." I very quickly remembered that Carol was coming to Regina for a performance on September 29. Thinking that she might like to have a recorded copy of those comments I took a clip from the tape and delivered it to the Conexus Arts Center. I should note that I told Kathryn Crosby what I was going to do and she asked if I would pass on her love and best wishes to Carol which I did.

Carol was delighted with the recording and said: "I had such a good time working with him, doing his specials and having him as a guest on my variety show. I treasure his words. It was very thoughtful of you."

CROSBYANA

Ken Crossland looks at the new book from Gary Giddins.

The summer months are ones that normally find me on the golf course rather than holed up indoors, particularly when the summer in Britain turns out to be the hottest and sunniest for 40 years. Apart from a dash through a couple of crime thrillers at a vacation spot, books generally take a back seat. Such were my plans for the summer of 2018, although one of my winter activities had been to chronicle and generally organise my collection of Alistair Cooke's Letter from America, a weekly, 15-minute essay that aired on BBC radio from 1946 until Cooke's death in 2004. As ever with such projects, it remains unfinished, but was fresh enough in mind to prompt me to rescue Nick Clarke's biography of Cooke from my library shelves, it waiting patiently, like so many others, for an escape from the "To Read" section. A book to dip into, periodically, through the summer, I thought, and indeed I had done so more than I expected when our Editor made me an offer I couldn't refuse. "Would you like to review volume two of Gary Giddins for the magazine?" he asked.



I got to work, initially with a galley proof before a soft back review copy caught up. Chapter One is called "Meanwhile" and it hits you between the eyes like a lightning bolt, so much so that it sent me scurrying back to Alistair Cooke. Not, I hasten to add because I was turned off by Mr. Giddins' opening, but because I had met the Bing Crosby he introduces us to in 1940 only once before. That was in a Letter from America broadcast on 23 December 1977, entitled "Two for the Road" and dedicated to the memory of Groucho Marx and Bing Crosby.

In his letter, Cooke gave us the Bing he knew, the "saucy, mischievous" figure on the set of a Road movie who, once the scene was done,

> *"visibly drooped into a character so quiet, so shambling and low-key that I got the impression he'd had a sleepless night and would soon be off for a nap".*

Cooke went onto to talk about the stresses that had beset Bing once his early days of success had passed:

> *"all sorts of problems in and around his family and friends: sickness, death, the bottle, truancy, trouble with his sons..... It is possible that he talked about these things to very close friends, but to everyone else, he put up the quiet defence of offhand, easygoing small talk".*

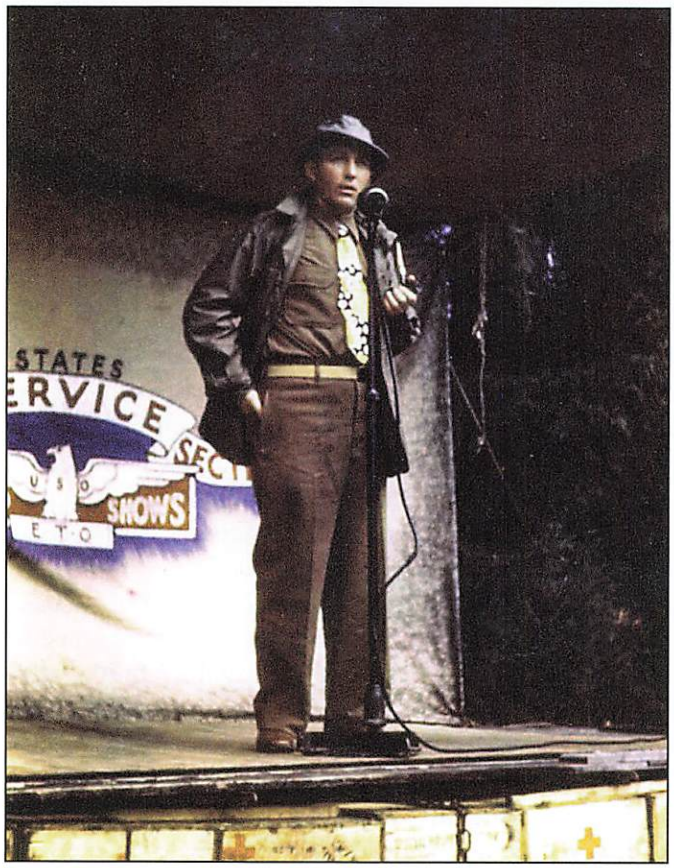
He was, said Cooke,

> *"more mature than any actor, author, musician, statesman or politician I have ever known in coming to sensible terms with great fame - the least exhibitionist celebrity I have ever known. Perhaps he was one of those people who, though not at all selfish, are deeply self-centred: what they call 'a very private person'. Because he couldn't identify with other people's troubles, he was able to appear, and to be, everybody's easygoing buddy, and forget death and disaster in a recording date or a round of golf."*

Perhaps like many others, I had assumed that this private side of Bing was something that had developed with the passage of time, chiselled by the scars of a life lived endlessly in the spotlight. Cooke himself alludes to that when he talks of Bing looking him in the eye "with the grey, tired eyes of a man who had seen everything - a lot of fun and a lot of grief".

This perception, for me at least, is the first casualty of Giddins volume two. The Bing we meet in 1940 exhibits all these characteristics, a man totally aware of

who he was, what he was and what power he possessed and yet truly unaffected by it. But he was also a man who would retreat alone to his study in the evening, "worn out by a day of being Bing Crosby". And yet for all the command and control that he possessed, the Bing of the early 1940s is fighting a losing battle against the wreckage of his marriage to the out-of-control alcoholic, Dixie, and the chilling harshness of his relationship with his four sons. Mr. Giddins had access to the unedited and unexpurgated Dictaphone belts that Bing used to dictate his autobiography, *Call Me Lucky.* There are passages in which he talks about his approach to punishing - beating - his sons that, even acknowledging that the world then was different to the world now, are hard to read and impossible to defend. When the Crosby family home is destroyed by fire in the New Year of 1943, we find Bing picking through the smouldering embers not just of his home, but his familial existence.



Entertaining the troops in 1944.

And then comes the war. We find Bing criss-crossing the country, raising dollars by the million for the war effort, entertaining troops, empathising with the injured sons of countless anonymous Americans in a way he was never able to do with his own bloodline. We find Bing in London and then France, briefly behind enemy lines, becoming the embodiment of American values and what the Allies were fighting for. We find Bing recording million-seller after million-seller, turning "White Christmas" into an anthem of peace and home, churning through week-in, week-out, live broadcasts of *The Kraft Music Hall*, and becoming Father O'Malley, humanising the priesthood but unwittingly creating the biggest obstacle to the divorce from Dixie that he so yearned for. And as the war passes, we find Bing in New York on the verge of a new life and a new romance, but obliged ultimately to turn his back and take the long train ride back to Hollywood.

The book is a wondrous piece of work. It runs to 582 pages of text, just 10 pages less than volume one, except that volume one covered 37 years and this covers less than six. Add to that 62 pages of Notes and Sources, most of which are as fascinating as the book itself. This microscopic examination of six years of Bing's life is made possible primarily by Kathryn Crosby's decision, following the publication of volume one, to open her doors to Mr. Giddins. That in turn brought access to Bing's own wartime diary of his time in England and France. Add to that a bizarre stalker's diary kept by two young sisters from New York during 1945/46, countless letters to and from Bing, an exhaustive list of author interviews that must stretch back over 25 years, and an intense and at times, challenging literary style, and you have a *magnum opus.* The best thing about the book? Simply that Mr. Giddins knows when to offer his own opinion about a Crosby performance and when to just present the facts and leave the reader to make his own judgement. But any book that can make me, after almost 50 years of Crosby collecting, listen with fresh ears to "Swinging on a Star" or want to watch *Going My Way* from a different perspective, is some book.

Some may say that too much attention is given to the backcloth to Bing's movies. *If I Had My Way* perhaps gets more airspace than the movie warrants, but as an inveterate page-skipper, I found myself skipping very little. If there is one thing I would have liked to have seen more of it is a discussion of the impact of Sinatra on Bing. There are plenty of references to Sinatra and indeed a chronicling of their first meeting, but I found myself waiting for an account of Sinatra's impact on the music scene, and how Bing responded, which never comes.

Perhaps Mr. Giddins is holding that for volume three. There surely needs to be a volume three. The story cannot end here, and indeed should not end in 1977. Someone needs to explain - and there is no better person than Gary - how America could eulogise this individual for almost half a century and discard him so quickly when he was gone.

A volume three or not will no doubt come down ultimately to how the book sells. It may also depend on what this book does to the tarnished and rusting legacy of Bing Crosby. The book's back cover proudly displays a quote from the *Wall Street Journal* that Gary Giddins is "the best thing to happen to Bing Crosby since Bob Hope". Yet for all the artistic merit, personal sacrifice

and patriotic fervour that is chronicled here, there will be those who look no further than the unpublished extracts from *Call Me Lucky* to find their poisoned darts. The world of Crosbyana is in for an interesting few months.

Ken Crossland ken54@blueyonder.co.uk

(Editor: Many thanks, Ken. There were many reviews of the book in the media and we do not have space to include them all. However, one that I particularly liked was by John McDonough in the November issue of DownBeat and with grateful thanks to that magazine it is reproduced here.)

The Churchillian Sweep of Crosby's Life

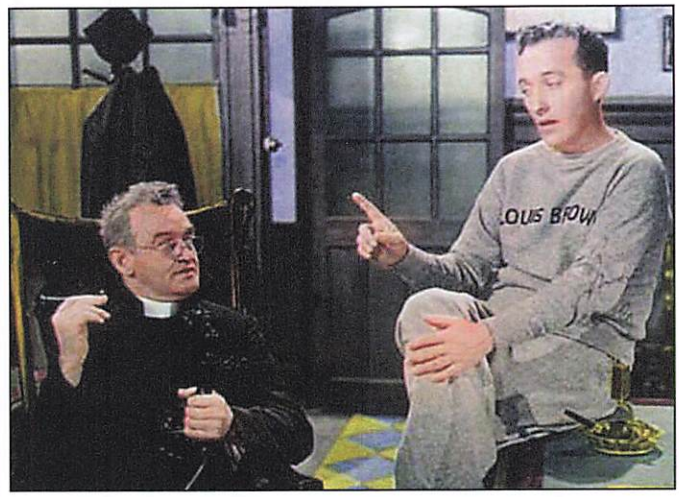
What Will Durant achieved for Western civilization in 11 volumes. Gary Giddins seems on track to do for Bing Crosby. In volume two of his Churchillian-scale chronicle. ***Bing Crosby: Swinging* On *A Star, The War Yean 1940*-1946 (Little Brown),** he magnifies six years into 700 pages that confirm Crosby's primacy among the searchlights of American music and identity. The word *definitive* seems petite.

Like Churchill, in whom the world upheavals of the 20th century converge. Crosby offers a similar sweep. His career is a prism for the whole of American popular culture from the last days of minstrelsy to the postmodern patty-cake of the *Road To* ... films. And like Churchill, the Crosby saga peaks in the early '40s when he ruled radio, records and films.

Giddins' main argument is that Crosby consistently personified an American cultural consensus. In charting his rise in volume one, *A Pocket Full of Dreams,* Giddins sketched a man whose Depression-era persona shrugged at wealth, instilled self-respect in the vagabond spirit and made un-employment a lark by stripping it of its moral reproach. Now in volume two, Crosby evolves from New Deal philosopher-hobo to serene prototype of understated patriotism.

During the war, domestic propaganda instructed as much as it motivated. It held up lessons of proper home-front behavior in the guise of entertainment. No one made the medicine go down more easily than Crosby in the 1944 film *Going My Way,* for which he won an Oscar for being Bing. Still, said Giddins, his Father O'Malley character was "as emblematic of the war years as Gregory Peck's Atticus Finch was to the civil rights era."

When Giddins undertook this project 20 years ago. Crosby was virgin territory for serious biography. There had been a minor mud-slinger and a bitter memoir by Bing's third *(sic)* son. Gary (much of which he moderates or recants here). Giddins must have envisioned a Jeckyl-and-Hyde narrative. Imagine his shock at the Crosby he found: mostly decent, loyal, disciplined, professional. The public Crosby was minted from the real thing. The present volume is a reassuring catalog of good deeds, small and large. They make clear why Bing mirrored a nation whose people always would be proudly nostalgic for what they became and the qualities they showed during the war.



Father O'Malley tells Father Fitzgibbon about his background.

Crosby probably would not fit into the many immodesties and excesses of contemporary America. So, his vast impact lies invisible in the post-Generation Y collective memory. He was suspicious of celebrity and embarrassed by its privileges. He was universally admired, but shunned pedestals. Giddins finds this at the root of the strict parenting of his four sons. All were raised in a bubble of fame, yet Bing was determined to instill in them a self-reliance that would immunize them against the "Hollywood kids" syndrome. Alas, good intentions never guarantee good outcomes.

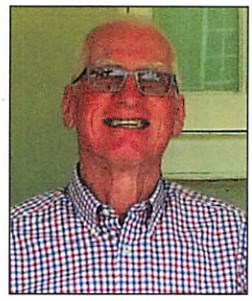
Giddins finds the Crosby cool something of a mask, though. It put distance between him and things inside that he preferred to keep at bay: vulnerability, self-awareness, unwanted emotions. Alas, they remain as beyond Giddins' reach as they were in the music. "Crosby is rarely singled out for the emotional tenor of his music," Giddins wrote. "[He] expressed inborn virility, secure and stoic; he did not invite listeners to inspect his insecurities: Bing never offered authenticity or solicited empathy. He left that to Sinatra, whose love songs were directed toward women. Through hundreds of camp shows here and abroad, though, Bing was singing to men. "Crosby's reserve was at the core of his success with the troops," Giddins said, because "restraint carried more weight than amorous histrionics."

Presumably, further volumes are coming, though Little Brown has made no promises. In Giddins' care, they likely will be equally compelling in their contexts. But the "war years" period has a glory that seems to live in a precious Golden Age of the imagination.

John McDonough

A Note from Australia

Graham Pascoe joins us again to offer some comments on our last issue.



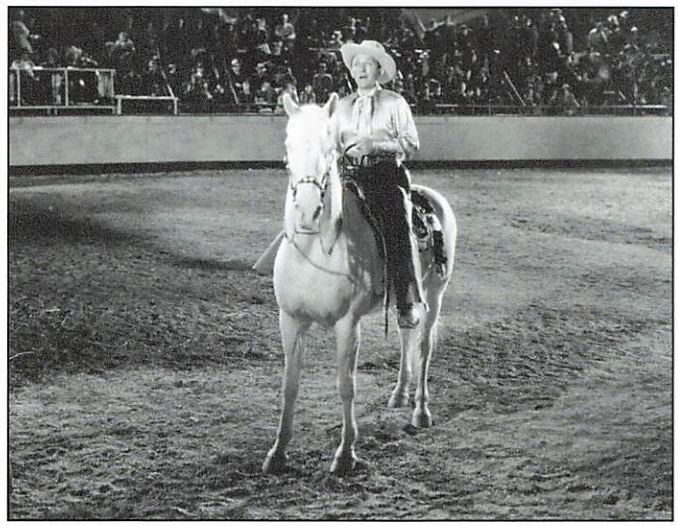
When I read David Lobosco's thoughtful article in *BING* on *Rhythm on the Range* I immediately got out my DVD of the film again and I agree that it's a great showcase for Bing's talents. Then I wondered how Australians responded to the movie back in 1936. It opened at Sydney's Prince Edward Theatre (known as 'the theatre beautiful') on 26th September. Coincidentally, in the same month Sydney folk were entertained by the final Sydney concerts of two international opera stars who would be guests on Bing's radio programs, Elizabeth Rethberg and Ezio Pinza.

Almost 1400 patrons could be seated in The Prince Edward and *Rhythm on the Range* was screened for two weeks, which was about average for the eleven Crosby and other feature films shown at that cinema in the 1930s. (As a matter of interest, the longest run of any feature film at the Prince Edward in the 1930s was *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* starring Gary Cooper which ran for eight weeks in 1935.) *Rhythm on the Range* then had a second run at two central city cinemas simultaneously, a schedule which was standard until 1938. About one month after its introduction in Sydney it went to Melbourne's State Theatre where it lasted for only one week but that was the nation's largest cinema, seating more than 3300. Perhaps it would have lasted longer had Melbourne's evening newspaper *The Herald* not advertised on its opening day that it would appear at a different theatre, although the error was corrected the following day. Then in November Melburnians could see it again for one week at the more average-sized Melba.

How did the critics react to this film? Were they as impressed as David and I?

The reviewer of *The Sydney Morning Herald* was puzzled, writing 'It is hard to know what to make of Bing Crosby's latest film. Are the producers pulling Bing's leg, or is the celebrated crooner an unconscious humourist?' David noted that this film captured Bing really having fun and it's likely that this critic felt the same way. In Melbourne, the critic for *The Herald* was not puzzled. The review was headed 'Cowboy Crosby sings again' and went on 'Bing Crosby can still make noises which are not violently distasteful. A singer like Arthur Tracy, however, would suggest that the days of crooners are numbered.' Tracy was appearing in a film titled *Street Singer's Serenade* at another cinema at the time.

What of the songs? David and I reckon there were some great songs and the two Decca discs with them were released in October. 'Bing is at the top of his form' wrote 'Wax' in the December issue of *The Australian Music Maker and Dance Band Review.* 'Wax' thought 'I'm an Old Cowhand' was a gem. Backed by 'I Can't Escape from You' it sold modestly, moving about two thousand copies until its deletion from the Decca catalogue in 1948. *(Editor: Note that the population of Australia in 1936 was only 6.7 million which may put the sales figures into perspective)* 'Empty Saddles' (sung impressively in one of my favourite scenes in the movie) was backed by 'Roundup Lullaby' and achieved similar sales results.



Bing sings "Empty Saddles".

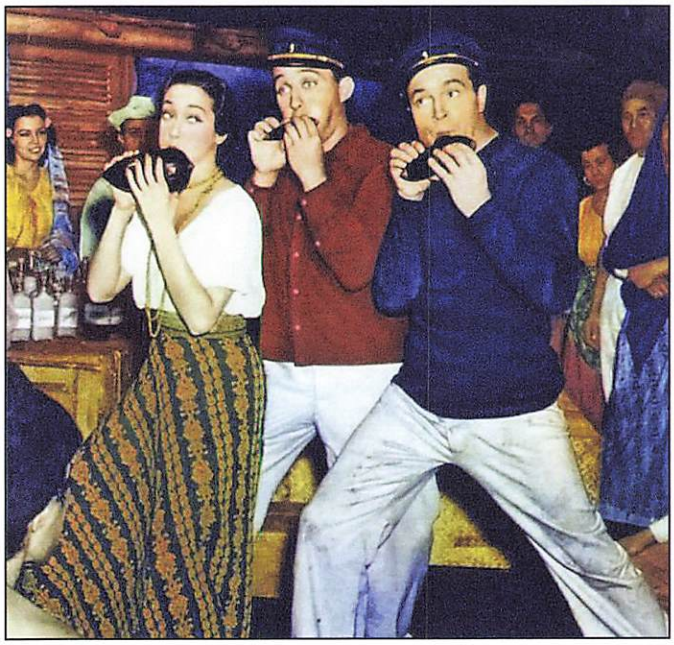
At the same time Australians were offered an HMV record with Eddy Duchin and His Orchestra playing 'I'm an Old Cowhand' and 'I Can't Escape from You' but that was deleted from the catalogue by 1940. Another comparison: Two other Crosby releases from that month each sold about twice as many records as Bing's *Rhythm* songs. They were 'I Love You Truly' and 'Just A-Wearyin' for You' from his first Decca session and 'The Sweetheart Waltz' with 'On Treasure Island'.

King of Jazz is such an important motion picture that Martin McQuade's look at the new Blu-ray release reminded me that my contribution to *BING* No. 172 described briefly the impression its two releases had in Australia in 1930 and 1933. I also recommend James Layton and David Pierce's book *King of Jazz; Paul Whiteman's Technicolor Revue* to anyone interested in Bing's career and their earlier work *The Dawn of Technicolor: 1915-1935* is also fascinating (and somewhat technical).

Ralph Harding mentioned Bing's regard for W C

Fields expressed in one of Michael Parkinson's television interviews. We are familiar with Bing's appearance with W C Fields in *Mississippi*. My research into Bing's impact on Australian entertainment surprised me in many ways including Aussies' familiarity with that comedian. Of the dozens of artists who had a professional association with Bing and who performed in Australia at some time, W C Fields was almost certainly the first. He was a sensation when he performed as a silent comic juggler on our Tivoli vaudeville circuit in 1903 and he returned in 1914 when his act included the hilarious billiards routine that shot him to stardom in *The Ziegfeld Follies* the following year.

Ralph referred also to Bing's explanation that a 'sweet potato' sung about in *Road to Singapore* was an ocarina. In March 1940, before *Road to Singapore* was shown in Sydney, *The Sydney Morning Herald* plugged the film in its 'Film news of the week' column: 'BING CROSBY and Bob Hope, both well-known singers and comedians, had to learn to play ocarinas, those clay sweet potato instruments, for scenes in "Road to Singapore' ... The pair play a duet while Dorothy sings.' (Did readers really believe that? I wonder.)



Bob and Dottie pretend to play ocarinas.

The other Blu-ray film version I enjoyed reading was Scott Payne's contribution on *Cinerama's Russian Adventure*. That's one of the few feature films in which Bing appeared that I've not seen. It was shown in Australia in 1966, running for four weeks at the Chelsea cinema in Melbourne where it was advertised as *Kinepanorama Russian Adventure* 'hosted by Bing Crosby ... Let Bing Crosby take you on a sight-seeing tour you'll never forget'. Although it had a reasonable run in Melbourne, the film was not screened in Sydney, Australia's most populous city. Perhaps the distributor had formed the same conclusion as the US critic Bosley Crowther whose unflattering assessment read:

> As narrator for this package, they have that old gadabout and Russophile, Bing Crosby, whose jolly tone and lingo tend to embrace all the Russians as chums. His narration provides meager information, however, aside from the fact that the Soviet Union spans 10 time zones. That is the most striking fact about Russia you are likely to get from this film.
> (Bosley Crowther, *New York Times*, April 14, 1966)

I'm sure it will be revealing to learn from Gary Giddins' second volume of Bing's contribution to the war effort. Your recollections under the heading '75 YEARS AGO' give us some insights and the phenomenal value of war bonds sold from his (and others') efforts. However, I would not expect many readers of *BING* to know that Bing Crosby supported the Australian government's war bond campaign.

In the early months of 1945 war news dominated Australian newspapers. In March *The Sydney Morning Herald* did find space for a short article titled 'Bergman and Crosby Win 1944 Oscars' at about the time that the government's Third Victory Loan opened. It hoped to raise 100 million pounds. The short films titled *The Road to Victory*, *All-Star Bond Rally* and *Hollywood Victory Caravan* which Bing had made for the US Treasury Department and the War Activities Committee were brought to Australia and screened in cinemas. Three 10-inch 78 rpm records were pressed in Sydney by Columbia using the 'Process Recording' label, which had been used for private recordings such as advertisements, speeches and political messages, with Bing singing 'Buy a Bond', 'Buy Another Bond Today' and 'We've Got Another Bond to Buy' and they were issued to cinemas to play at the interval and to radio stations. A test record of Bing singing 'I'm Saving a Dime out of Every Dollar' was sent also but, not surprisingly, was not pressed in this country.

Furthermore the Australian government was able to use Bing Crosby in the promotion of its 70 million pounds Security Loan in a film *Calling in the Tune,* also shown in cinemas. It shows Bing singing backed by a US Navy choir.

In 1945 Australia's Prime Minister John Curtin had a commemorative plaque displaying Australia's coat-of-arms made for Bing as a gesture of thanks. The inscription on the plaque reads: 'To Bing Crosby with thanks from the people of Australia for your help in our Victory Loan. Signed John Curtin, Prime Minister'. In 1982 when Bing's widow Kathryn arranged for some of his possessions to be auctioned the Australian media personality Bert Newton, a long-time Crosby fan, had a friend bid successfully for the plaque and one of Bing's pipes.

Malcolm's contribution on Bing's career to *Films of the Golden Age* was commendable and the human touch was evident as he wrote of his meeting with the fellow who recalled breaking down in tears during World War

II when he heard Bing sing 'White Christmas'. The effect of that record on Australians was far greater than the number of records they bought.

DECCA
MADE IN AUSTRALIA FOR
COLUMBIA GRAPHOPHONE (AUST) PTY LTD SYDNEY N S W
WHITE CHRISTMAS
(As Featured in Paramount Film "Blue Skies")
(Berlin)
(Speed 78)
BING CROSBY, Vocal
With John Scott Trotter and His Orchestra
And The Ken Darby Singers
(DLA3009)
Allans
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Late in 1942 the Australian army was fighting Japanese forces at Milne Bay in tropical New Guinea. Bill Spencer was there as a member of the Seventh Division of the Australian Imperial Force. Almost sixty years later he remembered, 'We heard Bing Crosby sing "White Christmas" a thousand times, and never got sick of it'. (Presumably the troops had heard it on Armed Forces broadcasts before the commercial release of the record in Australia.) Writing in a Melbourne newspaper just after Bing's death in 1977, Geoffrey Wright, apparently a World War II veteran, commented, 'I have seen hardened men cry on hearing that song, though they were Aussies and would never see a "White Christmas"'.

Like Jeremy Rose, I don't recall hearing Bing's *Return to Paradise Islands* album. It was not pressed in Australia although a Reprise single was issued here in 1965 with 'The Hukilau Song' (from the album) and 'Don't be a Do-badder' sung by Bing with Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr.

In the year following Bing's death Australian television audiences received a big dose of Bing on the small screen not only with re-runs of his movies but also with a special program *The Best of Parkinson*. It included excerpts of the 1975 interview so the two articles in *BING* were informative. One week before *The Best of Parkinson* was televised, the Sydney newspaper *The Sun-Herald* promoted the program with advice that Bing, accompanied by the Pete Moore orchestra, would sing numbers like 'Breezin' along with the Breeze' and 'Send in the Clowns'.

Graham Pascoe gpascoe34@bigpond.com

BING ON THE BOX

Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights - USA & Canada

Bing's films and other items seen on TV since our last issue was prepared were:

High Society	TCM
Holiday Inn	TCM
Robin and the 7 Hoods	TCM
The Princess and the Pirate	TCM

Bing and Fred entertain in *Holiday Inn*.

USA & Canadian Radio

Crosby Internet Radio

Crosby Internet Radio has continued to broadcast 24/7 with a wide variety of shows including Arne Fogel's excellent "Bing Shift" programs. The shows change on a monthly basis with the 15-minute 1954-56 show typically running throughout the day with other programs such as the KMH, Philco, Chesterfield and GE shows being interleaved every hour or so. The Crosby-Clooney shows are used frequently too.

Other USA shows

Arne Fogel's weekly radio program "The Bing Shift" is on Sundays at 8 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota. It can now be accessed on demand at http://www.jazz88.fm/on-demand/ and it's always enjoyable with an eclectic selection. For the playlists go to:

http://spinitron.com/radio/playlist.php?station=kbem&sv=l&showid=66

As an example, here's the playlist for his September 30th broadcast.

Because My Baby Don't Mean 'Maybe' Now - Baby, Won't You Please Come Home - Baby, Oh Where Can You Be? -

I've Found A New Baby - My Melancholy Baby - I Found a Million Dollar Baby (1931) - Love Won't Let You Get Away - Ain't Doin' Bad Doin' Nothin' - Chicago Style - It's Been a Long Long Time - Many Happy Returns of the Day - Hear That Band - Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean - The Donovans - Flores Negras - Glow Worm

Greg Van Beek's weekly radio series Nostalgia Radio Time on 1420 AM WJUB and on Live365 station *920 WON: The Apple* has continued its long run on Saturday nights starting at 9 pm (CST) / 10 pm (ET). Greg always has a "Bing Sings" segment in the hour-long program and he gave us some special treats too with the Woodbury show of March 19, 1935 being broadcast in July. In August, he used the Command Performance show assembled from the Bureau of Public Relations Show of August 30, 1942 and the biggest treat of all came in his August 18 program when he played two songs from the Woodbury show of January 8, 1935 which have probably not been heard since the original broadcast! The songs were "One Night of Love" and "What a Diff'rence a Day Made". Finally, on October 20, Greg included Bing's Chesterfield show from November 16th 1949 when Bob and Cathy Crosby were the guests.

You can catch Greg online at the www.1420thebreeze.com site or you can listen to the previous two weeks shows on Greg's podcast at nostalgiaradiotime.podomatic.com.

WAMU 88.5 is Washington's NPR station and on August 19, they broadcast "The Fred Allen Show" of May 23, 1948. It was subtitled 'Fred wants to do Bing's life story' and in it Bing sang 'I Kiss Your Hand, Madame' and took part in a version of "Bye Bye Blues" with a pseudo Rhythm Boys group.

TV highlights - UK

Crosby items seen since our last issue was prepared were:

Discovering Bing Crosby	Sky Arts
The Legendary Bing Crosby	Sky Arts

Sky also has many other Bing features in its *On Demand* section.

The BBC2 show *Antiques Road Trip* used a short clip from "Straight Down the Middle" on its September 14 edition. It's amazing how often that song crops up in the media.

UK radio

The National Presenters

Songs played on the BBC national networks of which we were aware over the last four months were:

Clare Teal: True Love (Aug. 26) – A Kiss to Build a Dream On (Sep. 2) – Where the Blue of the Night (Sep. 2) – Now You Has Jazz (Sep. 16) – (Get Your Kicks On) Route 66 (Sep. 30) – They All Laughed (Oct. 21)

Elaine Paige on Sunday: I Love You Samantha (July 22) – I Got Plenty of Nuttin' (Oct. 7)

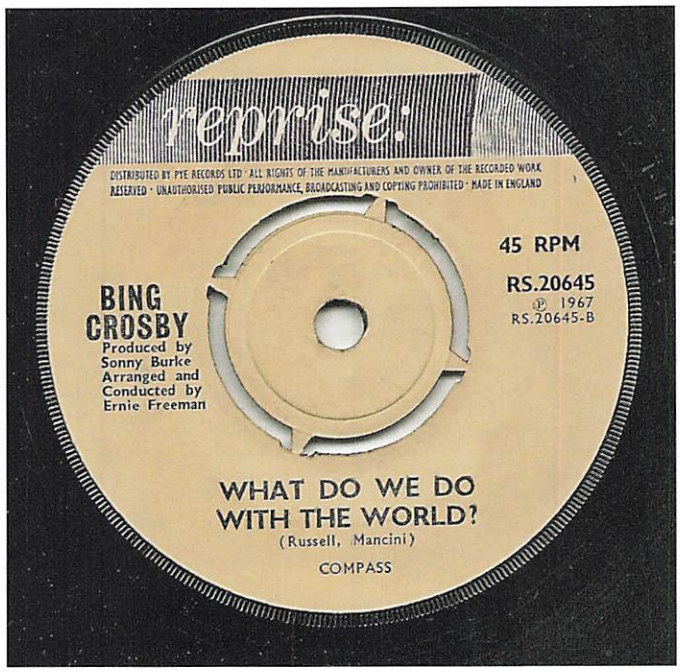
Don Black: Give Me the Simple Life (Jul. 15)

Paul O'Grady: Well Did You Evah! (Oct. 14)

Liza Tarbuck: Moonlight Becomes You (Oct. 27)

Breakfast: (Radio 3) – Gone Fishin' (Sep. 16) – Where the Blue of the Night (Oct. 14)

Radcliffe and Maconie (Radio6) – What Do We Do with the World (Sep. 3)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BING CROSBY
Produced by Sonny Burke
Arranged and Conducted by Ernie Freeman
WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE WORLD?
(Russell, Mancini)
COMPASS

The local radio presenters

BBC Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** has a programme of big band swing and balladeers which goes out each Sunday afternoon and Bing is featured regularly. For some years, Howard's broadcast has also been heard on Radio Humberside but sadly they stopped taking the show in August. Among the 17 tracks played by Howard during the four month period were: The Big Movie Show in the Sky (July 1) – The Daughter of Molly Malone (Jul. 29) – Both Sides Now (Sep. 30) – St. Louis Blues (Oct. 28).

Gerald Jackson continues to use his two programmes on local radio - "Unforgettable" on Radio Lancashire on Sunday afternoons at 4 p.m. and the other, the similarly named "Gerald Jackson: Unforgettable" on Radio Manchester on Sunday nights at 10pm to play plenty of Bing. At least 20 songs were heard including: Quicksilver (July 1) – Y'All Come (Aug. 5) – Alexander's Ragtime Band (with Connee) (Aug. 19) – The Magic Window (Sep. 2) – Brother, Can You Spare a Dime (Oct. 21).

Bill Rennells' ***Harmony Night*** show with his pal Al Ryan can be heard on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet. Bill is another presenter who is very happy to play Bing in response to requests and ICC members Stan White and Ian Lawrence keep him busy. Songs heard included: Deep Purple (Jul. 15 (for Stan White) & Jul. 29 (for Ian Lawrence) – Bouquet of Roses (Jul. 29 – for Stan) – Old Cape Cod (Aug. 12 – again for Stan) – Love You Funny Thing (Sep. 2) – I'm Getting Sentimental over You (Sep. 9) – Moonlight Becomes You (Oct. 14 – for Ian)

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The BBC website has details of the Crosby songs used in the last four months and the shows playing a fair number of Bing tracks were as follows;

Beverley Humphreys presents *Beverley's World of Music*: (BBC Radio Wales) – In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening (July 1) – I Love You Samantha (Oct. 14) – True Love (Oct. 14)
David Allen: (BBC Radio Surrey) – Moonlight Becomes You (July 14) – True Love (Jul. 28) – Well Did You Evah (Aug. 4) – Now You Has Jazz (Aug. 4) – That's What Life Is All About (Aug. 11) – True Love (Sep. 1) – When Irish Eyes Are Smiling (Sep. 15) – True Love (Oct. 6)
Neil Foster: (BBC Radio York) – Well, Did You Evah! (July 1) – True Love (July 22) – Well Did You Evah! (Aug. 19)
Michael Poulter: (BBC Tees) – Heat Wave (July 8) – Sugar (July 15) – I Can't Begin to Tell You (July 22) – Let a Smile Be Your Umbrella (Jul 29) – Swinging on a Star (Aug. 26) – The Song Is You (Sep. 16) – The Best Things in Life Are Free (Sep. 23) – I Can't Begin to Tell You (Oct, 28)
Vintage Vinyl: (BBC Tees) – True Love (July 1) – Around the World (Aug. 19) – Swinging on a Star (Sep. 23)

Australia

ICC member **Graham Pascoe** continues to present 'Morning Music' each Monday morning from 9 to 11 (Australian Eastern Time) on community radio station 2MCE-FM, located in Bathurst, New South Wales. Usually he plays recordings of popular music from the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Needless to say, he usually plays a couple of Crosby recordings. The station broadcasts on 92.3 FM in Bathurst and its programmes are streamed (but not archived) on www.2mce.org.

Finally don't forget Carol Farman who has a Crosby tribute every Wednesday afternoon at 3pm on Golden Days Radio FM 95.7.

Malcolm Macfarlane macwilmslo@aol.com

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

Victor Borge, born Børge Rosenbaum in Copenhagen, Denmark on 3 January 1909, was that rarest of all performers, a unique entertainer who was a show business original. No one has ever combined comedy and music in the theatrical manner of the man the critics acclaimed as the "Great Dane". For over sixty years he brought joy and laughter to international audiences with his wit and piano artistry and was a treasured icon of the concert world. Each time I met with him he was a gracious and amusing host and a delightful star to interview.

"What I do on stage is what I do off stage," he once told me, "present myself the way I see situations and the way I react to them. Of course I didn't do any comedy during my years of concertizing. However, I always thought that the restrictions of the concert stage were artificial. I thought it was a shame that a great performer like Artur Rubinstein, who was blessed with a wonderful sense of humour, was not able to express his witty observations to his audiences or comment on his music. What I do is just a natural reaction to the formality of the stage and to life in general."

In 1941 the young Danish performer was hired to do the "warm up" on radio's most popular variety program, Bing Crosby's Kraft Music Hall. He soon became a member of the multi-talented radio cast. Bing recalled fondly those radio days during one of our interviews at his Hillsboro home.

"Oh, he was a find! I think he had done a show or two with (Rudy) Vallee and the advertising agency wanted to get him on our show. That's when he was doing the phonetic spelling routine. He was such a hit that I think we had him on for 25 or 30 weeks. Every week he came up with some little vignette he could do. A very inventive, wonderful fellow; he became a big star later."

The unique and incomparable comedian/pianist was actually on the Kraft Music Hall for 54 weeks. "At that time", he told me, "I didn't speak much English. I had my comedy routines from Denmark translated into English. Of course, I hoped it was translated correctly, but had no way of proving it except for the reaction from the audience.

Victor in full flow on the Kraft Music Hall.

"I didn't speak much with Bing in the beginning because I couldn't understand English. However, when I began to speak English Bing's attitude was always the same, one of kindness and friendliness. There was always laughter from one week to the other. I was there for 54 weeks and I can't ever remember having a difference of opinion at those meetings. That was the beginning of my career in the United States and for that I owe everything to Bing Crosby."

A favourite Borge anecdote concerning Bing occurred with an overseas call and a case of mistaken identity. "A funny incident took place on the telephone with Bing and my wife, shortly after our arrival in Copenhagen for a homecoming engagement. Our hotel room telephone rang and the caller asked if I was there. She told him I was at rehearsal and asked who was calling. When he said it was Bing Crosby, she replied abruptly, 'Oh, yeah! Well, I'm Dorothy Lamour' – and hung up!"

In the years before the Second World War Victor Borge was already an established pianist throughout Scandinavia. He turned to comedy one night, when he took the place of the star comic of a variety show who had suddenly fallen ill.

During the dark days of the rise of Hitler, the Borge brand of humour was a powerful weapon against the Nazi party, to such an extent that his well-being was at times in jeopardy. "Then I went to Sweden and took engagements in Stockholm, because I saw what was coming and wanted to prepare for the future."

Just prior to World War II, he arrived in New York on one of the last trans-Atlantic liners that left Europe for North America. The ship's passengers were American citizens and displaced persons. The US Consul-General in Stockholm, an early fan, gave a special permit to him to board the ship with this encouraging endorsement: "I hope you will make the American people laugh as much as my wife and I did at your performance."

His arrival in New York was as a refugee with limited funds and little command of the English language. "I took English grammar in school, but learned to speak the language by attending the movies. I would sit through a double bill at one of the cinemas on 42nd Street and stay as long as I wanted for just 15 cents. I would see the same scenes over and over again and was able to absorb the language and observe the way that audiences responded to the dialogue. In my room I would memorize the lines and react to them – and in that way I broadened my English vocabulary." It was from his early attempts at writing in English that he developed his hilarious punctuation comedy routine.

Away from his touring and international acclaim, the famous perennial performer was happiest when he and his wife, Sanna, entertained their five children and nine grandchildren.

He never lost his fascination with the world around him and was always energized by the laughter of his audiences. "What I do is universal. Anyone who knows anything about music recognizes that I am satirizing. I have always found that a smile is the shortest distance between people. And when you need to reach an audience a smile will achieve that goal."

I met with him for the last time during his June, 1995 sell-out engagement at Ottawa's National Arts Centre. "When you think of how often I have come to Ottawa and that people keep coming back to see me," he said laughingly, "it pleases me to know that they continue to show such good taste."

Victor Borge died in his sleep, Dec. 23, 2000 at his Connecticut home. The gentle "non-melancholy Dane" would have turned 92 on Jan. 3. He had just returned from Copenhagen, where his adoring fans embraced him once again as their most beloved native son.

Gord Atkinson

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have left us since our last issue was prepared include:

Mary Carlisle died on August 1st aged 104. Born Gwendolyn Witter in Boston on Feb. 3, 1914, she was brought to Hollywood by her widowed mother as an uncle already worked there as a film editor. Gwendolyn later took her stage name from her maternal grandmother, Mary Ella Carlisle.

At age 14, while they were having lunch at the Universal commissary, the blue-eyed girl was spotted by producer Carl Laemmle Jr. and given a screen test, though she did not eventually sign with the studio. After completing high school, however, Carlisle met a casting director at MGM, then showed up in uncredited roles in such films as *Madam Satan* (1930) — as Little Bo Peep — *The Great Lover* (1931) with Adolphe Menjou and then *Grand Hotel*. In 1933, Carlisle received a big career boost when she was selected as a "Baby Star" — a young actress thought to be on the threshold of stardom — by the Western Association of Motion Picture Advertisers. (Others picked that year included Gloria Stuart and Ginger Rogers.)

Over the next seven years, her films seemed to cover all the genres and every category of leading man. They included *The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi* with Buster Crabbe, *Handy Andy* and *Down to Earth* with Will Rogers, *Say It in French* with Ray Milland, *Touchdown, Army* with Robert Cummings, *Beware Spooks!* with Joe E. Lewis, *Palooka* with Jimmy Durante, *Murder in the Private Car* with Charles Ruggles, and a Preston Sturges comedy, *Hotel Haywire*.

Judy Marlowe meets Doctor Bill Remsen.

But it's her three films with Bing which have the most interest for us. She was as good as typecast in two of the three films she made with him. She was his leading lady in a trio of Paramount pictures from the thirties: *College Humor* (1933), *Double or Nothing* (1937) *and Doctor Rhythm* (1938). In the first one she was a student being taught by Bing as Professor Danvers. In the other two she was a rich girl. In *Double or Nothing* she was Vicki Clark, one of the beneficiaries under a strange will that would also bring riches to Bing if he could double $5000 within a month. As heiress Judy Marlowe in *Doctor Rhythm* a chance meeting with Doctor Bill Remsen (Bing) leads to eventual romance and happiness.

By 1937 Bing had control of who would be cast as his leading ladies - he had a contractual right of acceptance and refusal – and it says much that he chose Mary for two successive films. She also formed part of his entourage which went to Spokane in 1937 when Bing was given an honorary degree and she appeared on the *Kraft Music Hall* broadcast there. Mary was also a guest on the Kraft show of July 7, 1938.

As early as 1934, there were rumours of her engagement to James Blakeley, a British-born actor who later became a 20th Century Fox executive. When the two finally married in 1942, he was an Army flying instructor. Mr. Blakeley died in 2007. In addition to her son, Ms. Carlisle is survived by two grandchildren.

She retired from acting after playing a vampire's beautiful young target in *Dead Men Walk* (1943) and went on to manage Elizabeth Arden salons in Hollywood and Beverly Hills.

In recent years, she was a resident of the Motion Picture Fund Retirement Home in Woodland Hills, from where she was taken out weekly by a young legion of admirers.

It was sad that the British papers *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* published obituaries quoting Mary "bad-mouthing" Bing. I complained to the Telegraph and was told that the writer based the quotes on interviews with Mary. Not sure I believe them.

Gloria Jean passed away on August 31st at the age of 92. Born Gloria Jean Schoonover in Buffalo, New York in 1926, she was 12 when she was engaged by a smallish New York opera company and became the youngest member of an opera troupe in the United States. Gloria Jean was being trained as a coloratura soprano, when her voice teacher, Leah Russel, took her to an audition held by Universal Pictures movie producer Joe Pasternak in 1938. Pasternak had guided Deanna Durbin to stardom, and with Durbin now advancing to *ingénue* roles, Pasternak wanted a younger singer to make the same kind of musicals. Up against hundreds of others, Gloria Jean won the audition. Under contract to Universal, she was given the leading role in the feature *The Under-Pup* (1939), and became instantly popular with moviegoers. Her next film was *If I Had My Way* (1940) with Bing. Prior to filming, she had appeared on the Kraft Music Hall with Bing on January 25, 1940. She was the film's "leading lady", albeit juvenile lead as the fifteen year old orphan helped by Bing. It was one of those films made for Universal outside Crosby's Paramount contract. Gloria Jean had her own song in the film - "Little Grey Home in the West" - as well as duetting with Bing on a couple of Burke-Monaco numbers. This was good going for someone who was only making her second film appearance.

With Bing and El Brendel in *If I Had My Way*.

She enjoyed working with Bing. Sixty plus years after the event she recalled: "Bing was great to work with and he was swell to me. He gave me the camera lead in many scenes and pushed to get me extra shots. He even gave me a surprise birthday party on the set." She was in the W. C. Fields' starrer *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break* the year after *If I Had My Way* but the films which followed were not great successes: *Get Hep to Love* (1942), *Mister Big* (1943), *Ghost Catchers* (1944) and so on through to *There's a Girl in My Heart* (1950). By then it was apparent that she wasn't going to make that difficult transition to adult roles and only three more films followed, the last being *The Ladies Man* (1961). At the age of thirty-five show business was behind her and she gained employment as a hostess, greeting and seating dinner guests at a restaurant in Studio City, California before going on to work for Redken Laboratories for 30 years.

Don Cherry, a leading pop singer of the 1950s who performed at clubs and hotels by night while becoming one of America's top amateur golfers by day, died on April 4 at a hospice in Las Vegas. He was 94. Growing up in his native Wichita Falls, Tex., Mr. Cherry was immersed in both music and golf.

He embarked on his show business career in his early 20s as a big-band singer, then turned to the recording studio. His biggest hit was "Band of Gold" recorded in 1955 which reached the Top 10. More than a half-century later, the recording provided the soundtrack for the opening scene of the first episode of the television series "Mad Men," in which the advertising executive Don Draper (played by Jon Hamm) is smoking at a Manhattan restaurant table.

Don Cherry first made the Billboard charts with "Thinking of You" and "Mona Lisa" in 1950 and with "Vanity" and "Belle, Belle, My Liberty Belle" in 1951.

In his 70s and 80s, he collaborated with his friend Willie Nelson on several albums.

As a golfer, Cherry won many small amateur golf tournaments in Texas after serving stateside in the Army Air Forces in World War II, then captured the 1953 Canadian Amateur Championship. He also played on three victorious Walker Cup teams (1953, 1955 and 1961), in a tournament that matches the United States against Britain and Ireland in the amateur version of the Ryder Cup.

He was a contender as an amateur into the fourth round of the 1960 United States Open, at Cherry Hills in suburban Denver, finishing in a three-way tie for ninth at even par, four strokes back of Arnold Palmer. Palmer had famously rallied to win from seven strokes behind the leader in the final round.

The golfing sketch with Bing and Dean.

Unsurprisingly, it was as a golfer that he first connected with Bing, playing in the Crosby Pro-Am on several occasions and singing at the clambake at the end of the tournament. He and Bing both guested on the Colgate Comedy Hour on January 4, 1953 and they were also guests on the Dean Martin Show of April 13, 1967 when they took part in a golfing sketch.

Don Cherry recorded for the Decca, Columbia and Monument labels, appeared on radio and TV variety shows (notably Dean Martin's, on which he was a frequent guest) and played many of the big rooms in Las Vegas. His most lucrative work came as the voice of the animated character Mr. Clean in TV detergent commercials during the late 1950s and early '60s. He was said to have made nearly $800,000 from residuals.

Charles Aznavour, the French singer and actor died on October 1 at the age of 94. Aznavour, who was born Shahnour Varinag Aznavourian in Paris to Armenian parents, sold more than 100m records in 80 countries and had about 1,400 songs to his name, including 1,300 he wrote himself. He was sometimes described as the French Sinatra because of his stirring, melancholic style.

He left school aged nine to become a child actor and went on to have a successful parallel acting career, most notably appearing in François Truffaut's new-wave classic *Tirez Sur le Pianiste* (Shoot the Piano Player), Claude Chabrol's *Les Fantômes du Chapelier* (The Hatter's Ghost), and the 1979 Oscar-winning film adaptation of Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*.

His singing career was forged in occupied Paris during the Second World War, performing in cabarets as his parents secretly worked with the resistance, hiding Jews, communists and others in their apartment.

Aznavour opened for Édith Piaf at the Moulin Rouge and the popular singer was an early adviser – and flatmate. "I brought her my youth, my madness; she loved my whole jazzy side." She advised him to have a nose job, only to declare, "I preferred you before" after the surgery.

He is one of the most celebrated exponents of the French "chanson" form – easy-listening songs with vivid lyrics, rich in storytelling, emotion and humour. One early song, 1955's "Après l'Amour" was banned on French radio for its depiction of a couple basking in post-coital happiness. His biggest hit in English was "She", a 1974 romantic ballad which spent four weeks at No 1 in the UK singles chart, and was also recorded in French, German, Italian and Spanish. Aznavour's only other solo hit in the UK was with "Dance in the Old Fashioned Way", which reached the top 40 in 1973.

As a songwriter, one of his biggest successes was "Yesterday When I Was Young" which was a hit for Roy Clark in 1969 and was recorded by many artists including Bing for his "Seasons" album. Aznavour sang the song on the Hollywood Palace show of December 31, 1966. This was the only occasion he worked with Bing and they both took part in a medley of 1966 hits with the other guests.

Over the years Charles Aznavour recorded duets with the likes of Sinatra, Elton John, Céline Dion, Bryan Ferry and Sting, as well as the classical tenors Luciano Pavarotti and Plácido Domingo.

THE WAY WE WERE

The section of the magazine where we look at what Bing was doing in years gone by.

100 YEARS AGO

Harry Crosby (aged 15) resumed his studies at Gonzaga High School on September 11, 1918. The syllabus for the year included:

3rd Year - 1918-1919

Religious Instruction - English - Latin (6 hours a week) - Geometry - English History - French - Elocution and Debate

On October 13, the world-wide influenza epidemic reached Gonzaga and a member of staff died. Classes were suspended on October 24 because of the continuing influenza outbreak but were able to be

restarted on October 28.

Bing played on the Junior Yard Association football team in November and that month Germany admitted defeat and signed the armistice to end the First World War. Ted Crosby noted the event in his book *The Story of Bing Crosby*.

> It was a time for rejoicing in the Crosby household, for Ev and Larry had come through safely. Larry was disgusted because he hadn't gone overseas, and Ev kept writing home about his big plans for the future.
>
> But Kate Crosby's hopes for a rapid betterment of the family's economic situation after the war were not realized. Larry was a long time finding work, finally obtaining a high school teaching position in Tacoma, with a night newspaper reporting job on the side to supplement his income. Everett returned a few months later, bronzed, carefree and full of French phrases which delighted his younger brothers and sisters. He could not be reinstated in the position he had held in Montana, so he began looking around Spokane for a job. When nothing materialized, he finally headed for the Coast, already disillusioned.

75 YEARS AGO

In September 1943, Bing (now aged 40) was still busy filming *Going My Way* and continuing his Kraft Music Hall broadcasts. The Hooper rating for the broadcast during the winter season was 22.2 placing the program in twelfth position. The top show was Fibber McGee & Molly with a rating of 31.9. In the ensuing weeks guests included Frank McHugh, Falstaff Openshaw, Phil Silvers, Jinx Falkenburg, George Murphy, Jack Douglas, Lucille Ball and Cass Daley. During this period, the groaner was also heavily involved in recording eight shows for the Armed Forces Radio Service as well as taking part in 'Cavalcade for Victory', a nationwide broadcast on all four networks to launch the Third War Loan. In addition, he found time to star in in the Lady Esther Screen Guild radio production of *Birth of the Blues* with Johnny Mercer and Ginny Simms and also guest on a Bob Hope radio show.

On September 18, the American Federation of Musicians reached agreement with most record companies and lifted its ban on recording by its members. Bing was soon back in the recording studios laying down four tracks with the Andrews Sisters, including "Pistol Packin' Mama". The record was released in Decca's "Personality" series priced at 75 cents, 40 cents more than their usual releases.

> The studio got quiet. A red light went on. It changed to green. Patty Andrews gave out with a short scream. The drummer made with his stick on the edge of his drum, in imitation of a pistol shot, a "rim shot," the musicians call it. Crosby and the band began as one.
>
> The Andrews Sisters accompanied Bing in the verse, took a chorus with him, then in the second chorus they divided up the lyrics, Bing taking a line for himself, with the girls coming in for hot licks. When they would sing a line of their own, they'd move up close to the mike. When they took the background, they'd move back. Everybody was in the groove.
>
> Toward the end of the song, Bing was supposed to sing by himself the line: "Lay that pistol down, Babe," but he deviated from the set routine and talked instead. In a rich, Amos 'n' Andy drawl he ad-libbed, "Put that thing down, honey, before it goes off and hurts somebody."

> It caught the Andrews Sisters completely by surprise. Patty bit her lip to keep from laughing. They almost broke up. Mr. Kapp, the Decca man, came out of the booth, laughing. "Let's do it again, Bing," The song doesn't need any tricks. It's novelty enough as it is."
>
> "No, let it stay," replied Bing. "People will play it over again to hear what I'm saying. It'll sell more records."
>
> Kapp considered a moment and then agreed. That, of course, is important to Bing and the Andrews Sisters. Bing gets 5 cents royalty on every record sold. So do the Andrews Sisters. Mr. Kapp believes that the record will sell over a million.
>
> The record of "Pistol Packin' Mama" will be on the market in six weeks. And since "Pistol Packin' Mama" stands likely to become a national menace, you'd better get ready to like it. One songwriter along Vine Street commenting on the sensational success of "Pistol Packin' Mama" said: "Those mother songs are always a hit."
>
> (Sidney Skolsky, *Hollywood Citizen News,* October 6, 1943)

On October 1st, Bing recorded "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and "Poinciana" and both of these recordings were huge hits.

The filming of *Going My Way* finished on October 22 and Bing departed for a well-deserved break in Idaho and Nebraska. Bob Crosby deputised for him on the Kraft show for 5 weeks.

Der Bingle returned to the Kraft Music Hall on December 2 and filming started the next day on *Road to Utopia*. Guests on the Kraft show during December included Ed Gardner, Lucille Ball, Cass Daley, Joan

Davis and Phil Silvers. Ken Carpenter, the Music Maids, the Charioteers, Trudy Erwin, and Leo "Ukie" Sherin continued as regulars.

Bing guested on Ed Gardner's *Duffy's Tavern* radio show on December 7 then he starred in an hour-long Lux Radio Theatre version of *Dixie* with Dorothy Lamour and Barry Sullivan on December 20. On Christmas Eve, he took part in an all-network radio special *Christmas Eve at the Fronts* with Bob Hope and then he went to the Hollywood Canteen on Cahuenga Boulevard and sang fourteen songs in all including "White Christmas". A press report indicated that he had received the biggest hand ever at the venue. Bing subsequently went to three army camps in the Los Angeles area and sang midnight mass at each one accompanied by Jimmy Van Heusen on the piano.

Crosby had recorded at least four more shows for the AFRS during December and on Christmas Day he and Bob Hope hosted the two-hour Elgin Watch Show on CBS-radio. On December 29, the crooner recorded "San Fernando Valley" which topped the charts in 1944.

Bing came in at number four in the annual box office stars listing in the U.S.A. Betty Grable was number one. During 1943, Bing had ten records which became chart hits.

50 YEARS AGO

During September 1968, the 65-year old star recorded several TV shows. On September 14, he taped a television special which was called *Feelin' Groovy at Marine World* with Anissa Jones and the Young Rascals at Marine World, at Redwood City near San Francisco. The special was shown on February 15, 1969. Then he recorded a Hollywood Palace show Bobby Goldsboro, Sid Caesar, and Jeannie C. Riley which was transmitted on September 28 and finally in late September / early October he recorded a special with Bob Hope, Stella Stevens, The Supremes and Jose Feliciano at Paramount which was shown on October 23.

In October, Bing and Kathryn flew to Mexico to watch the Olympic Games returning in time to be present at the opening night ceremonies of the San Francisco International Film Festival at the San Francisco Masonic Auditorium and for Bing to play in the pro-am at the Lucky International Golf Tournament at Harding Park, San Francisco on October 30.

In November, he made the *Hey Jude, Hey Bing!* LP with Jimmy Bowen and his Orchestra at United Recorders Studio, Hollywood.

> Bing Crosby has lost none of his mellow warmth of voice in *Hey Jude, Hey Bing!* (London SHU8391) as he gives us his versions of the Beatle ballad, "Little Green Apples," "Both Sides Now," and "Those Were the Days," thereby adding to the potency of the songs themselves.
> (*The Gramophone*, July 1969)

On December 10, Bing and Kathryn hosted an exclusive dinner party at Chasen's in West Hollywood for the founding members of the President's Council of Immaculate Heart College. The Bob Hopes attended. Then it was the taping of the Christmas edition of the Hollywood Palace, with Glen Campbell and the Lennon Sisters, which was shown on December 21.

Bing and his family plus Mary Morrow (ex-wife of Bill Morrow) spent Christmas at the Rising River ranch for ten days where they were snowed in for a while. They visited Wyntoon (the Hearsts' Bavarian fairyland) during their stay at the ranch before returning home to Hillsborough on New Year's Eve.

KEEPING TRACK

Richard Baker has a lot to tell us this time

In BING #179 I mentioned a vast parched desert. Well I do believe an oasis is in sight in respect of CDs, because by the time you read this the issue of a new CD from Sepia will be on the near horizon. A bumper bundle of DVDs mentioned in the "Stop Press" in the same issue looked as if it would deserve a welcome – or so I at first thought.

COMPACT DISCS

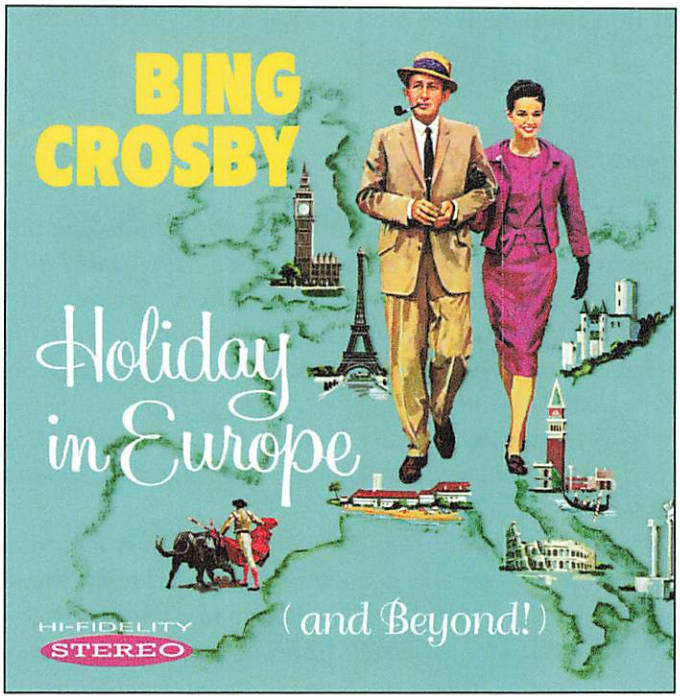
Bing Crosby: Holiday in Europe (And Beyond) Sepia 1334 £7.99 UK

1. April in Portugal /2. C'est Si Bon /3. Never On Sunday /4. More and More Amor /5. Moment in Madrid /6. Morgen /7. Two Shadows on the Sand. /8. Under Paris Skies /9. Domenica /10. Pigalle /11. My Heart Still Hears the Music /12. Melancolie

Bonus Tracks

13. Hawaiian Paradise /14. The Belle of Barcelona *(with Lindsay Crosby)* /15. Tobermory Bay /16. Along The Way to Waikiki *(a)* /17. Down among the Sheltering Palms *(a)* /18. The Road to Hong Kong *(b)* /19. Way Down Yonder in New Orleans *(c)* /20. Let's Sing Like a Dixieland Band *(c)* /21. Paris Holiday *(b)* /22. Pagan Love Song / Cuban Love Song /23. Down Argentine Way / What a Diff'rence a Day Made /24. Calcutta w*ith Rosemary Clooney* /25. Around The World /26. C'est Si Bon *(Rehearsal Track)*

a -with Bob Scobey b - with Bob Hope c - with Louis Armstrong.



Sepia are scheduling this CD for issue in February. It is a delightful collection with twelve tracks from the 1961 LP at its core (only previously available on CD as an import from Japan). There is a big hint in the "And Beyond" in the title because the bonus tracks follow the travel/holiday theme beyond Europe. They are drawn from other LPs from around the same time - "Bing with a Beat" with Bob Scobey's Frisco Jazz Band, "El Senor Bing", "Fancy Meeting You Here", "Bing and Satchmo", with other appropriate songs, some from radio, winding up with one of the rehearsal tracks from the controversial first session for "Holiday in Europe". The total package is highly entertaining and the "Holiday in Europe" tracks have been unavailable for far too long. I'm sure that most fans will want to go off on this extended world tour with Bing and some of his friends. The notes are by Christopher Popa who has been employed as a Music Librarian with Chicago Public Library for more than 20 years.

DVDs and BLU-RAY

The Best of the Bing Crosby Specials – Region 1 only. Time Life $99.95
Available from Time Life direct. (https://timelife.com/). Note: Time Life will not ship outside North America.

Disc 1 – Jan. 3 1954 "The Bing Crosby Show for General Electric" (w Jack Benny)*; Sept. 29, 1959 "The Bing Crosby Show for Oldsmobile" (w Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, Louis Armstrong)*; Jan. 10, 1952 "Faith, Hope and Hogan*; Jan 1954, The Jimmy Demaret Show; July 19, 1962, Interview with Bing at Honolulu.
Disc 2 – Oct. 13, 1957 "The Edsel Show" (w Frank Sinatra et al – see comment below); Oct 1 1958 "The Bing Crosby Show for Oldsmobile" (w Dean Martin, Patti Page, Mahalia Jackson); March 2, 1959 "The Bing Crosby Show for Oldsmobile" (w Dean Martin, James Garner, Jo Stafford); Feb. 29 1960 "The Bing Crosby Show for Oldsmobile" (w Perry Como).
Disc 3 – Dec. 11, 1961 "The Bing Crosby Show" (ABC) (w Bob Hope, Marion Ryan, Terry-Thomas et al)*; Dec. 24, 1962 "The Bing Crosby Show for Clairol" (w Mary Martin, Andre Previn).*; Dec. 20, 1957 "Happy Holidays with Bing and Frank"*; Out-takes from 24th December 1962 – "The Bing Crosby Show for Clairol"
Disc 4 – Oct. 5 1960 "The Bing Crosby Show for Oldsmobile" w Rosemary Clooney, Carol Lawrence & Johnny Mercer; May 14, 1962 "The Bing Crosby Show" (ABC) w Bob Hope, Smothers Brothers, Edie Adams & others; Nov. 7, 1963 "The Bing Crosby Show" (CBS) w Buddy Ebsen, Caterina Valente, Andre Previn; Jan. 1964, Thermo Fax commercial; May 19, 1967 "Girl Talk" *(interview for Australian TV).*
Disc 5 – March 20, 1961 "The Bing Crosby Show for Oldsmobile" w Maurice Chevalier, Carol Lawrence; Feb. 15, 1964 "The Bing Crosby Show for Lever Brothers" w Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Bob Hope, Rosemary Clooney, Kathryn Crosby; March 14, 1967 "A Little Bit of Irish"* w Milo O'Shea & other Irish stars; Aug. 1976 "Bing's Britain" *(promo for British Tourist Authority)*;
Disc 6 – Dec. 17, 1969, "Bing Crosby and Carol Burnett: Together Again for the First Time" w Carol Burnett, Juliet Prowse & Roy Clark; April 13, 1970 "Bing Crosby - Cooling It" (NBC) w Flip Wilson, Dean Martin & Bernadette Peters; Dec. 14, 1971 "Bing Crosby and the Sounds of Christmas" w Robert Goulet, Mary Costa & the Crosby Family.
Disc 7 – Dec. 3, 1975 "Merry Christmas Fred from the Crosbys" w Fred Astaire, Crosby Family; Dec. 1, 1976, "Bing Crosby's White Christmas" w Jackie Gleason, Bernadette Peters & the Crosby Family; Nov. 30, 1977 "Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas" w David Bowie, Twiggy & the Crosby Family.
Disc 8 – March 20, 1977 "Bing! . . .A 50th Anniversary Gala" w Bette Midler, Bob Hope, Mills Brothers, Rosemary Clooney, others & the Crosby Family; Feb. 27, 1972 "Bing Crosby and His Friends" w Bob Hope, Pearl Bailey & Carol Burnett; 1970 "Down Argentine Way; Bing Crosby in Buenos Aires" *(Interview conducted in Spanish and English with interspersed songs and narrative by Kathryn Crosby).*
Disc 9 – Nov. 3 1971 "The Carol Burnett Show"*. *(Disc contains two apparently complete Carol Burnett shows, one only including Bing).*

Disc 10 – Oct. 24, 1975 "Highlights of a Quarter Century of Bob Hope on Television"; Dec.15 1965 "A Bob Hope Comedy Special".
PLUS "Bonus" disc – "The Legendary Bing Crosby".

It is most important that readers should understand that most of the shows listed are incomplete. Those that are complete or substantially so are marked.*

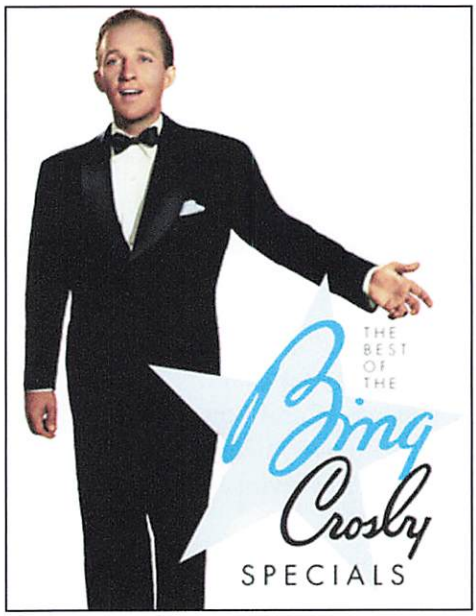
The announcement of the issue of new CDs, DVDs or other material can produce excited anticipation, and the advance news of the issue of a such a bumper package as this creates even greater interest, so when I saw Time Life's publicity for "The Best Of The Bing Crosby Specials" consisting of no less than ten DVDs (plus a "bonus") the interest was intense. Then early negative reports started coming through, and when I received my copy it was with some trepidation that I started my viewing. I am afraid that the early negative reports were all too well deserved. So what do we have here? The discs can be categorized into three distinct groups.

A - Discs 1 and 3 are precise copies of, respectively "The Television Specials Volume 1" disc 1 and "The Television Specials Volume 2 – The Christmas Specials" disc 1 right down to introductory graphics and "bonus material" issued by Bing Crosby Enterprises and still available.

B- Discs 2 and 4-9 have, as I understand it, been compiled and edited by Time Life themselves from material made available by Bing Crosby Enterprises. I fear that Time Life have made a real mess of things and to my mind have betrayed a total lack of understanding, appreciation and respect for the place that Bing and some of his co-stars hold in the history of popular music. Rosemary Clooney, Jo Stafford, Maurice Chevalier and Perry Como emerge badly from the butchery perpetrated under the guise of editing by Time Life. Some of the material consists of edited versions of items offered in more complete form on other discs in the "Television Specials" volumes.

C - Discs 9 and 10 are copied respectively from Time Life's own bundles titled "The Carol Burnett Show – The Lost Episodes" and (I believe) "Thanks for the Memories: The Bob Hope Specials".

Moving on to other aspects, technically, with one possible exception, the audio and video quality is as good or better than anything else I have seen of the material in question, though insofar as it replicates "The Television Specials" that is only to be expected. Secondly, despite the appalling editing there are some very interesting and enjoyable items. However, I fear that the negative points, which are many, far exceed the positives and I found the overall viewing experience frustrating, disappointing, bewildering and downright annoying in turn. Frustrating because in my view at least some of the best parts have been cut out. Disappointing because as shown, there is so much duplication with relatively recent issues. Bewildering because it is difficult to understand the rationale behind decisions to remove whole swathes of the core of the shows yet retain quantities of introductory material and end credits which do not reflect the editing that has taken place. Bewildering also because I cannot understand what audience Time Life might be aiming at. If it is at Crosby fans many of them will already have much of what is included here (and might share my frustrations at much of the remainder). But who apart from relatively keen fans would spend $100 on such a set? Annoying because I regard the very title as misleading – two whole discs are not Crosby specials at all, but those of Carol Burnett and Bob Hope. And, as mentioned it is highly debateable whether the best parts are actually included. Annoyed also because I feel that in the truncated form in which some of the shows are offered they fail to give a true representation of those shows. And a mixture of all the above because I feel very strongly that treatment by those with a true feeling for the material and the place of certain other artists in the Bing Crosby story and popular music of the era could have done so much better.



Disc 2 is one of frustrations. The Edsel show was packed with major stars and I would certainly include it among the best of the specials. Here however it has been cut down to a bare shadow of the original. Among the stars were Sinatra, Armstrong, Hope and Clooney but Rosemary has all but vanished. We are left with something like eight musical numbers and not much more than 20 minutes of the original one hour show. These things can be subjective but to my mind the bits that remain are not the best. The editing has been thoughtless as well – we are told in the introduction who we will see, and the end credits tell us who we should have seen, but sometimes they are seen only in fleeting form. Similar treatment has been served out to the other shows on this and other discs. Jo Stafford was the guest star on the 1st March 1959 Oldsmobile show. At least here she manages an appearance but the original show includes an extended and enjoyable sequence with Bing and Jo covering the songs from Bing and Rosemary Clooney's LP "Fancy Meeting You Here" which has vanished. The last show on this disc has Perry Como as guest.

Here a nadir is reached and we have on my timing about 14 minutes of the original but that includes (as with the others) the introductory titles and end credits. (A better flavour of the Como show was once available on LP.)

Disc 4 follows the pattern of disc 2. We get between 20 to 28 minutes per show, but here we have not only the problem of clumsy editing but also of duplication, because a complete version of the show of May 14th 1962 appears on "The Television Specials Volume 1", disc 2, as does the Thermo Fax commercial and the "Girl Talk" interview.

Disc 5 hits another low. The greatest American entertainer of his generation meets the greatest French entertainer of his generation. They sing a prolonged and entertaining medley of their songs with a lot of interplay but this has been completely lost, though we get a longish item from an Italian operatic singer long since forgotten, Aldo Monaco, to whom references on the internet seem confined to this single appearance. The Feb. 15th 1964 show which follows introduces the starry cast but in fact Rosemary Clooney is again almost completely expunged and almost all the musical items are cut in favour of the sketches, though a Pepsodent advert is thrown in. The disc as a whole is saved by the inclusion of the complete "A Little Bit of Irish" show, which is totally different compared to other specials because Bing is out and about in Dublin, sings in the Guinness brewery and meets and performs with more or less well known Irish stars of the era. A nice change from the studio based shows, though technically I believe the video quality is not up to the standards of the Varese Sarabande DVD of 2006 which is a little sharper and has deeper colours. "Bing's Britain" is interesting for the rather romanticized and quaint views Bing seemed to hold about the British. Apparently the whole nation spent all of our leisure time on the grouse moors, in salmon streams, on the golf course or at the races, but again, it was on "The Television Specials Volume 2 – The Christmas Specials", disc 2.

Disc 6 shows marginal improvement as the opening show with Carol Burnett has not been so severely cut. We get 33 minutes which is ten minutes better than some of the previous items, but there are still some notable omissions with a big leap through a 1960s song medley. But then "Cooling It" has been severely edited. Dean Martin should participate in a sustained song medley but doesn't – we only see him in a series of cameos and a sketch. But the complete show is again available on "The Television Specials Volume 1" disc 2! Then more of the same, because "The Sounds of Christmas" complete is on "The Television Specials Volume 2 – The Christmas Specials", disc 2.

Disc 7 maintains the very marginal improvement, with the Fred Astaire episode (very enjoyable) managing 33 minutes, though still losing a lot. The second item "Bing Crosby's White Christmas" was recorded as early as July 1976. Johnny Mercer had died on 25th June, so a Mercer tribute medley was added. Here it has been removed and for once I suppose the exclusion from an otherwise Christmas based show is logical, though I would still like to have had it. Then we have "Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas in truncated form. Again however the complete show is on disc 2 of "The Television Specials Volume 2 – The Christmas Specials".

Disc 8 kicks off with the famed live Pasadena concert celebrating Bing's 50 years in show business. We do get 45 minutes of it but there is still credit given to stars who are notable only by their absence. This is followed by a slightly less than 30 minute portion of BC and Friends all of which is totally new to me. From what I can establish it appears to include most of the musical items from the show and I'm uncertain what might have been left out. The Argentine segment is revealing because it shows Bing with some competence in Spanish and Kathryn utterly at home with the language. The interview is conducted virtually bilingually with English subtitles with interspersed explanatory material by Kathryn. It's quite interesting with a diversion to explain some aspects of Bing's involvement with the tape recording industry. I fear I found the Argentinian interviewer irritating. There are some nice songs but unfortunately it is not quite complete and some songs from the original have been cut.

Disc 9 seems to me to be an example of Time Life doing things cheaply and carelessly. It contains two more or less complete Carol Burnett shows with Bing featuring as a guest in one. In no possible way can it be described as a Bing Crosby special. It is lifted straight from another issue and has a playing time of 2 hours, 34 minutes. Bing first appears at 59 minutes and then pops up intermittently until 1'40".

Disc 10 follows a similar course. Everything is Bob Hope with Bing making frequent, sometimes fleeting, appearances. Because the first show highlights parts of Bob's career it picks up several fragments from a number of TV shows.

The "bonus" disc, "The Legendary Bing Crosby" was originally issued in 2010. The copy included has a marginally altered wrapper with the date 2018. It includes a few individual songs from shows within the main bundle!

A pattern emerges. The discs that are copies of earlier BCE issues have had some care exercised in selection, with minimal editing whilst those discs selected and edited by Time Life have been dealt with in various degrees of clumsiness. There seems to have been a preference to include comedy sketches at the expense of musical items. "Cooling It" on disc 6 is a primary example. Dean Martin, for all the persona he adopted, was a very capable singer and there was good inter-action between him and Bing but all the songs have been ignored. In my opinion at least some of the sketches and comedic material have dated badly and personally I would have preferred the emphasis to be in the other direction. If, for whatever reason it was necessary to shorten and edit the shows it would have been

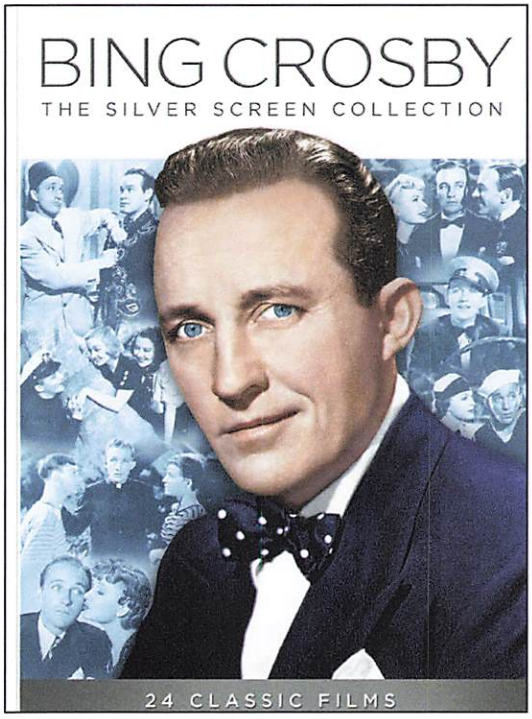
better to remove the bulk of the introductory titling and end credits and produce versions which are admitted and declared to be highlights. Included with the set is a small format 36 page booklet with many small pictures but minimal information about the shows – just air dates (some incomplete and one wrong) and original participants.

Time Life also offer the set in "deluxe" form with the addition of "Thanks for the Memories: The Bob Hope Specials", for $196.90.

I fear that I cannot recommend this set. It might have attractions to those who fervently desire some individual items despite the highly edited nature of most of them, but most collectors would do far better to look at the two sets "The Television Specials" volumes 1 and 2, which cover a lot of the material here in more complete form, with nine complete shows which really are specials and much "bonus" material (some of which is also repeated here) on four DVDs.

She Loves Me Not **Universal Vault Series - Region 1 only - Around $20**

An early outing for Bing on screen, 1934, often overlooked. The film featured several early hits including "Love in Bloom", "I'm Hummin', I'm Whistlin', I'm Singin'" and "Straight from the Shoulder".



The Silver Screen Collection

Universal have re-packaged part of their mammoth bundle of 24 films on 13 discs into two smaller segments **"Bing Crosby; The Silver Screen Collection - The 1930s"** Region 1 – Around $32. Five discs – College Humor/We're Not Dressing/Here Is My Heart/Mississippi/Rhythm on the Range/Waikiki Wedding/Double Or Nothing/Sing You Sinners/ East Side Of Heaven *(plus bonus - American Masters: Bing Crosby Rediscovered).*

and **"Bing Crosby; The Silver Screen Collection - The 1940s"** Region 1 Around $39 Five discs – If I Had My Way/Rhythm on the River/Birth of the Blues/Holiday Inn/Going My Way/Here Come the Waves/Blue Skies/Welcome Stranger/Variety Girl/The Emperor Waltz/A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. *(plus bonuses).*

Readers should know that the original package of 24 films on 13 discs is still available and includes all the films listed above plus Road to Singapore/Road to Morocco/Road to Utopia and is much more competitively priced at around $25, at least on bingcrosby.com and Amazon.com! So far as I can establish no region 2 versions exist but all are being imported into the UK through Amazon and others, with Amazon showing the larger bundle at £36, the 1930s version at £29 and the 1940s at £58. I will not comment further on the pricing logic. Note that the Amazon websites do not list the films in each package correctly, showing something like half the actual content.

An announcement from Kino Lorber Studio Classics tells us that they will be releasing Road to Singapore (1940), Road to Zanzibar (1941), Road to Morocco (1942), and Road to Utopia (1945) on Blu-ray. Dates look a little vague but it follows on from announcements covering January 2019 releases.

THE INTERNET

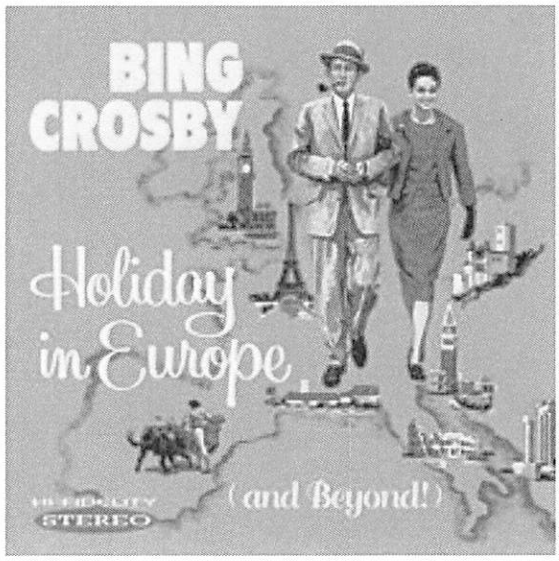
I find that I have become a little hampered in trying to get up to date and keep tabs on things because a number of informative US internet sites have closed themselves off to any access from Europe in apparent fear of the The General Data Protection Regulation now in force here. The regulation relates to processing of personal data, which none of the sites in question can do as they were formerly "open access" with no requests for any information, and their fears are entirely mistaken. At the most they plant "cookies" so that they can collect a website address to notify visitors of things about which they have shown an interest, but most don't even do that.

Noted on eBay, amongst the plethora of movie posters, foyer cards and alleged "rare" records, is Bing's own framed "gold" LP "All Star Festival", asking price $1,100.

TECHNOLOGY

From time to time I have noted aspects of advances in technology which could have implications for the way we enjoy various media formats placed before us. The latest drawn to my attention is from Samsung - *"Samsung has*

BING CROSBY: HOLIDAY IN EUROPE (AND BEYOND!) SEPIA 1334



We were delighted to learn that Richard Tay of Sepia Records will be issuing this CD in February / March.
The tracks will be:
1. APRIL IN PORTUGAL
2. C'EST SI BON
3. NEVER ON SUNDAY
4. MORE AND MORE AMOR
5. MOMENT IN MADRID
6. MORGEN
7. TWO SHADOWS ON THE SAND
8. UNDER PARIS SKIES
9. DOMENICA
10. PIGALLE
11. MY HEART STILL HEARS THE MUSIC
12. MELANCOLIE

BONUS TRACKS
13. HAWAIIAN PARADISE (radio)
14. THE BELLE OF BARCELONA with Lindsay Crosby (radio)
15. TOBERMORY BAY (radio)
16. ALONG THE WAY TO WAIKIKI with Bob Scobey
17. DOWN AMONG THE SHELTERING PALMS with Bob Scobey
18. THE ROAD TO HONG KONG with Bob Hope
19. WAY DOWN YONDER IN NEW ORLEANS with Louis Armstrong
20. LET'S SING LIKE A DIXIELAND BAND with Louis Armstrong
21. PARIS HOLIDAY with Bob Hope
22. PAGAN LOVE SONG / CUBAN LOVE SONG
23. DOWN ARGENTINA WAY / WHAT A DIFF'RENCE A DAY MADE
24. CALCUTTA with Rosemary Clooney
25. AROUND THE WORLD
26. C'EST SI BON (Rehearsal track)

The ICC intends to purchase a supply of the CD and can make it available to members at a discounted rate (including postage). To order your copy of the CD, complete the form below and send it to Michael Crampton. Please make cheques payable to "International Club Crosby".

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To Michael Crampton, 19 Carrholm Crescent, Chapel Allerton, Leeds LS7 2NL.

I enclose a payment of £7 (£8 for Ireland & Europe, £10 for rest of the world) for the CD "Holiday in Europe (and Beyond!)".

FROM:

Name_____

Address:_____

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enjoy various media formats placed before us. The latest drawn to my attention is from Samsung - *"Samsung has unveiled a new ultra-high definition TV, one capable of 8K resolution – with four times the number of pixels as current top-end 4K screens - - 8K refers to the number of horizontal pixels in a screen – with this newest resolution having four times as many pixels vertically and horizontally as current top-end 4K screens, and 16 times more than standard full HD screens."* Not long ago I admit I was dismissive of the claimed advantages of 4K, though when I had to replace my main screen I did so with a 4K version in order to "keep up". However this is very much a question of diminishing returns and I do have some difficulty in finding much material to match it or identifying the difference anyway. Possibly it's my aged vision, but you really need a gigantic screen to appreciate such high resolutions. As yet we don't have Bing fully covered by Blu-ray, and I am unaware of anything in any higher resolution, though technically pristine original film, properly processed, could benefit. It is ironic that video screens are getting much larger with higher definition, whilst audio, by popular demand, is moving in the other direction, with an obsession to miniaturise loudspeakers, which are totally incapable of producing clean deep sounds.

Richard Baker

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Legacy: In the Key of Bing

Don Grigware writing on the Broadway World web site on October 2 gave details of a recent show in North Hollywood.

"Legacy in the Key of Bing" can only mean the affable, charming Bing Crosby who swooned millions of people on the radio with only his voice. D. Scott Eads has been a fan of Crosby since his childhood, growing up in West Virginia, and with his clean good looks and smooth vocal instrument is the ideal choice to replicate the icon's music. On Sunday September 30, Eads brought his lovely show to Sterling's Upstairs at the Federal with a sold out house well in advance of the performance. Backed by a four piece band with expert musical director Rich Eames at the piano, and with special guest stars Laura Dickinson and Will Collyer, the show hit the ground running for a rollicking 75-minute spin.

This is Eads' cabaret debut and for a first timer, he did wonderful work. Friendly and warm with his audience, he oozed charm from every pore, keeping his stories to a minimum, concentrating on Crosby's era in music. The music was the main course, and it seemed that most of Crosby's repertoire received loving attention. Songs like "Sweet Georgia Brown", "Blue Skies", "Swanee", "Swingin' On a Star", "Pennies from Heaven", of course his signature tune "White Christmas" and even his vaudeville days with "Ten Ten from Tennessee" and "Is You or Is You Ain't My Baby?" gave the show the variety that it needed. I saw one flaw. "There's No Business Like Show Business" opened the set and it would have been nice to see Eads enter from the back of the room and make his way through the auditorium, greeting his guests in a more personal manner. Staying on stage and letting people come up to him is OK, but mingling adds a nice touch. His voice was at its best on the upbeat numbers like "...Georgia Brown"and performing with his guest stars was the most winning part of the show.

Laura Dickinson, always a resourceful singer/actress in LA musical theatre, served as his Rosemary Clooney, essaying a beautiful "Tenderly" and then later dueting with Eads on "Slow Boat to China" and "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To". Dickinson added a grounded, sincere quality to the show, kind of like Rosemary did whilst performing with Bing. Will Collyer, sidekicking as Eads' Frank Sinatra, is also a musical force to be reckoned with. He performed a bright and breezy "I've Got the World on a String" and then dueted with Eads on a terrific "Me and My Shadow", where both got the chance to sashay about with a few fun dance moves.

Eads doesn't sound exactly like Crosby nor does he try to do an impression. He has the relaxed natural quality to his delivery that makes the whole experience of the era pleasant to listen to. That's as close to Crosby as he needs to get. It was a memorable evening with Eames on the keys, Dori Amarillo on guitar, Gary Wicks on bass and Greg Sadler on drums. The combo was a perfect match for the material, making the music soar. "I'll Be Seeing You" was Eads' encore and I couldn't help but think that yes, indeed, hopefully we'll be seeing a lot more of him on the cabaret scene.

Don Grigware

(Editor: I was not aware of Mr. Eads before and it's great that a younger man is making tributes to Bing. I see that he is on Facebook and that he lives in Los Angeles.)

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